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PC

- New piracy shock
- British 486 machine
- Laptop chess
- Stereo sound card

AMIGA

- Xenon II shock
- SEUCK 2 on the way
- AMOS details

ST

- New disk copier
- Stacey hard disk
- SEUCK update

ALSO INSIDE

PCW, CPC, Spectrum, C64, Archimedes, QL, BBC, MSX – expert hints, tips and news for your machine
PLUS: MGT's SAM Coupé reviewed

EXCLUSIVE

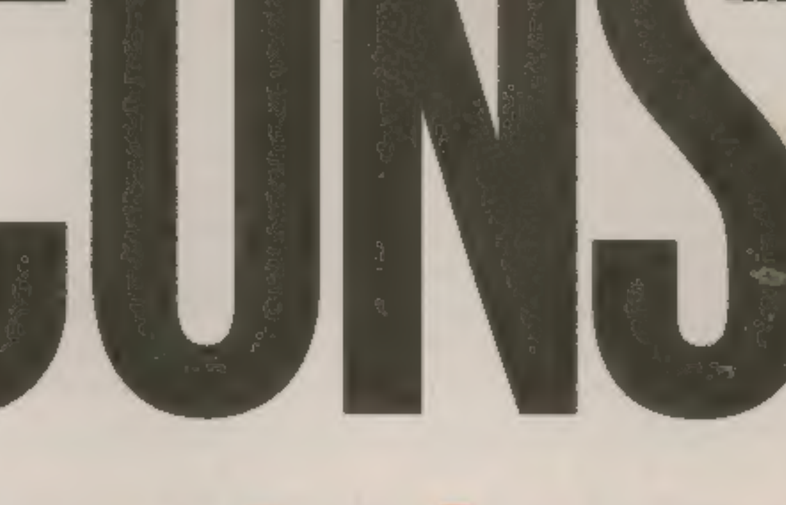
AMSTRAD CONSOLE

Secret plans leaked page 3

HOLY BATBUNDLES!

Commodore unleashes autumn Amiga blitz

page 2



PC SHOW

Find your way around the year's biggest show with our FREE guide

Begins page 39

SHOPPING EXPRESS 48 PAGES OF BARGAINS

THIS WEEK'S BUYERS' GUIDE TO THE BEST MONITORS, SCANNERS, JOYSTICKS AND MICE

CONTENTS

FEATURES

SECOND HAND 8
Thinking of buying a second-hand micro? Check out our guide to prices

SAM COUPE 10
Review of this remarkable new eight-bit Spectrum compatible machine from MGT

GAME BLASTER 65
Improve your PC's sound with this stereo board

LAPTOP CHESS 75
A top chess program which is designed for your laptop

BUYER'S GUIDE 19
Monitors, scanners, joysticks and mice surveyed

REGULARS

COMMENT 4
LETTERS 12
SHOPPING EXPRESS 17
Pick up some great bargains here

JOBS 59
The best in computer vacancies

TECH TIPS 66,67
READERS' CLASSIFIED 26
12 pages of readers' ads start here

GAMEPLAY 72,73,74
A weekly round up of what's new on the games scene, plus reviews, your views in Playback and the hard-hitting Street Talk

VOUCHERS 17,18
Buy *Express* for 58p and save £10!

BACK PAGE 78
More listings with a difference

YOUR MACHINE

Amiga 68
ST 68
PC 77
CPC 70
Spectrum 70
Commodore 64 76
PCW 77
QL 76
BBC, MSX 76
Archimedes 77

Why Maxwell's loss is good news for you

Last week the huge Robert Maxwell-owned distributor Microdealer closed down, but what's bad for the trade is good for end users in the short term.

The enormous firm was one of the companies whose job it is to buy kit from manufacturers and sell to dealers. With such large volumes of product changing hands mark up on each item is quite small. Distributors make money by being extremely efficient and very big.

The knock-on effect for the industry and for buyers is marked. Piles of stock will have to be sold at knock down prices and in job lots. Hundreds of computers and thousands of items of software will then make their way into mail order companies and "the market stall brigade".

This is bad news for official dealers who will be beaten hands down on price. Micodealer plans to pay off all its debts and some stock will be returned to manufacturers and publishers.

But it is all great news for bargain hunters who will be able to buy computer products at silly prices over the next few weeks.

However, although it will hardly worry buyers, this flurry of bargains can only hurt the industry in the long term as established dealers suffer and manufacturers lose ground.

When a big distributor goes it effects everyone. The only people who will benefit from this in the short term are end users. Dealers and creditors will be very upset.

Microdealer distributed for most games companies as well as hardware manufacturers including Commodore.

• *Maxwell: Losing out*

COMMODORE PLAYS ITS JOKER

Commodore has introduced a radically new bundle for the Amiga designed to attract quality-hungry computer buyers.

The popular A500 machine is to come with the brand new Ocean game *Batman The Movie*. It's the first time that a major game has been bundled immediately it has been launched.

In the past hardware has normally been thrown together with old games bought from publishers at rock bottom prices. Amiga owners will recognise the value of this new pack as it also comes with the highly acclaimed flight simulator *F16 Interceptor* and the brilliantly playable hit *New Zealand Story*. Budding artists will also get a chance to dive into *Deluxe Paint II*.

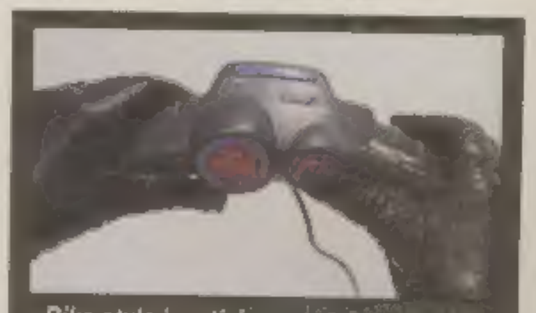
The Batman Pack also comes with a modulator and costs £399. It will be available from the beginning of next week.

The last Amiga bundle was based on the Air Miles promotion – Commodore's UK boss Steve Franklin has already admitted that it wasn't as successful as it might have been. The firm is clearly aiming to attract buyers with top notch software which can take advantage of the machine's capabilities.

• Batman's rival is bundled with the new Amiga pack

Meanwhile Commodore has put together a special package for prospective C64 owners. Called the Light Fantastic Pack it comes with a light gun and 3D glasses. There's also an impressive selection of games including massive hit *Robocop* with other Ocean favourites *Rambo III*, *Platoon*, *Hypersports* and *Combat School*. Others include Mindscape's *Blaze Out*, and the old *Batman* game.

Games aren't the only attraction. The C64 will come with a typing tutor, music program, paint package and an arcade construction kit. This kit costs £149. Current owners of the C64 are being offered the pack as a £40 upgrade.



• *Bike style joystick*

Bike stick zooms out

A curious new joystick has been launched shaped like a motorcycle handlebar.

The Spectravideo Flight Controller is grasped by both hands, while using the thumbs to control the curser. Gamers who enjoy getting stuck into wheelie games and flight affairs will obviously benefit.

A Spectravideo spokesman enthused: "It will bring alive computer games that were previously dull and titles which were previously exciting will be positively glowing with health."

The £12.95 gadget can be found on 01 900 0024.

Real Cyberpunks to wreak havoc

A group of young computer enthusiasts are reported to have organised themselves into a "computer terrorist" outfit with anarchistic and destructive aims.

The Cyberpunk is a new breed of hacker spawned in the US with ideological aims. Inspired by science fiction author William Gibson the youngsters have drawn up a "charter of irresponsibility" with the aim of bringing complete data access "to the people".

Hacking expert Donn Parker, speaking at the Royal Aeronautical Society in London last week, warned British industry bosses that the same will happen here within the next few years.

He said that hackers are no longer pranksters or just curious computer users but militant political types eager to further "misguided" aims through computing talents.

He urged the Government to draw up a law making hacking illegal – a step which the Government plans within the next 12 months. Parkerwarned banks, government agencies, airports and hospitals to tighten up their computer security.

The American hackers are named after the outlaw "cyberpunks" portrayed in Gibson's sci-fi thriller Neuromancer.

● Sugar refuses to comment

AMSTRAD PLANS CHEAP CONSOLE

EXCLUSIVE by Colin Campbell

Amstrad is secretly developing a games console based on its CPC computer, *Express* can reveal.

The machine is expected to be launched in April although it has already suffered delays. It was to have been ready before the end of this year but abiding problems with other computers have slowed development down.

A small team of engineers are currently working on the project at Amstrad's Brentwood headquarters. Such is the secrecy of the project that many of the firm's employees don't even know about the console. Those who do have, as always, been instructed not to talk about it.

However, according to details leaked to *Express*, the developers have been instructed to take the five year old CPC machine apart and reconstruct it as a 256K cartridge based console.

Amstrad is planning to launch it at an entry level price of about £70 with a light gun version costing about £90. Amstrad's boss Alan Sugar has long felt that he should be involved in the imuch predicted console explosion. Japanese giants such as Sega and Nintendo are already preparing for a pitched battle for the British market.

Amstrad's pragmatic approach means that it will not be overly concerned with the technical specification. Rather, the console will be pitched as a true consumer product – more of a toy than a computer.

The unnamed console will be Z80 based, like its CPC parent. New chips to handle extra graphic ansd sound capabilities have been considered although that could cause some problems for existing CPC software.

Hardly surprising, Amstrad is not commenting on this matter. *Express* put a call through to boss Alan Sugar's direct line. A gruff and unmistakable voice at the other end snapped the answer "no" to a request for a short interview, and then hung up.

A spokesman for the firm commented: "It all sounds very interesting. I can't say I know anything about it. Amstrad are always working on new projects and obviously we can't comment on them."

The thinking behind using the CPC as the basis for the machine is obvious. There is an absolute mass of software available for it which could easily be converted to cartridge format. Amstrad will, in all probability, sell the console with a cross section of those games.

Whether Amstrad will take a Nintendo type approach to the software is not known. The Japanese giant has made millions from software sales by keeping a tight grip on what is sold. All software comes from Nintendo and this will not have escaped Sugar's attention. The British firm has made a fortune by applying an aggressive Japanese approach to the European marketplace.

Those who argue that Amstrad wants to leave its low end, games orientated image behind may have forgotten that the firm's self proclaimed aim is to make money.■

Outlaw virus menace call

The influential Computer and Business Equipment Manufacturers Association in the US has urged Government to class virus writing as criminal behaviour.

The Washington based body has called on federal government to crack down on a problem which is growing to epidemic proportions in the US. CBEMA said that Congress should be concentrating on the people who write viruses rather than the equipment they use.

It also wants police and other law agencies to be taught how to deal with computer crime, to establish a government and industry body with the sole aim of tackling computer viruses, and to spend money on urgent research.

This falls in line with the Confederation of British Industry's concern about computer crime. That body has repeatedly called for Government action although its fears are aimed more at hackers than viruses.■

• Xenon II: Problem solved

Xenon II loader bugs Mirrorsoft

Mirrorsoft has moved swiftly to combat a potentially embarrassing flaw in some copies of the Amiga version of *Xenon II*.

The highly acclaimed shoot 'em up has an inexplicable bug which means some copies won't load. Mirrorsoft could not say how many of the games are affected but leading London dealer Software Circus estimated that about two in ten games are affected.

Mirrorsoft said that the problem only affects the first batch of the games most of which have been stopped at retail level. However some will have been sold through and disgruntled buyers are urged to contact Mirrorsoft.

"Unfortunately we do seem to have had a problem with it but we've managed to stop most of the games. We're not sure what it is. There doesn't appear to be an rhyme or reason to it," said Mirrorsoft's Cathy Campos.

A spokesman for programming team The Bitmap Brothers refused to comment on suggestions that the problem is related to anti-piracy programming in the boot block sector of the disk. Buyers of *Amiga Format* magazine need not worry since that playable demo is not affected. Mirrorsoft can be contacted on 01 928 1454.

PC Show

• *PC Show: Worth a visit*

Don't forget to show up at the computing year's biggest event – Earls Court this weekend.

The twelfth PC Show kicks off on Saturday with tens of thousands of eager enthusiasts and bargain hunters expected to make a beeline to the great venue. On show will be all the big names in the industry – the people, the companies and, most importantly, the products.

Organiser Montbuild is expecting a record attendance exceeding 100,000 . If you can make it to London will cost £3.50 to get in. Be sure to pop by and visit *New Computer Express* on the Future Publishing stand (2218)■

At last: STacey arrives

This week sees the official UK launch of Atari's ST compatible laptop the STacey.

The machine has been shown to visitors to Atari's Slough headquarters as well as at launches in the US and Germany. Howeber, it has not been set before the British public as yet.

Atari is only going to launch the 20Mb hard drive version at the PC Show with the entry level machine arriving early next year.

The hard disk STacey costs £1299 and will be available immediately through normal Atari outlets. The entry level price is £799.■

• *STacey: UK at last*

COMMENT

WHY AMSTRAD WILL SUCCEED

An Amstrad console? But the market's already crowded, isn't it – Sega, Nintendo, the PC Engine, even the old cheap and cheerful Atari games consoles...

Expect to see plenty of articles confidently predicting the flop of the Amstrad console. The other consoles are better, they'll say; the console market will not take off in the UK; and they'll cite Amstrad's mishaps this year over their top end PCs. The console will then sell in truckloads and prove them all wrong.

What makes this crystal ball gazing so easy? First, critics love to get at Amstrad, for a variety of reasons among which is the company's obsessive hatred of journalists. Second, it's true that other consoles would be hard to beat in sheer performance terms, and Amstrad are not renown for technical innovation.

But an Amstrad console would be a sure-fire winner. The mere name will sell most of them; consoles are currently being bought by the eventual users, but the presence of the Amstrad name would sell the games machines to the 'granny market' – parents and grandparents buying presents. Also, the console market seems set to expand steadily in the coming year, and the presence of an Amstrad machine would spur that growth on.

Finally, whatever mistakes the company has made in its ventures into the business market, it knows the home consumer like no other company, and has enough marketing muscle to make it succeed.

BRITAIN LOSES OUT AGAIN

This week we read of the 'breakthrough' by Hitachi in the US in neural networks, the basis for genuine artificial intelligence. Last week, Express reported that researchers from the University of North Wales in Bangor had given up their neural network project through lack of funds. They wanted £75,000 to keep their low-cost, high-power system ahead of their US and Japanese rivals, but got nothing, despite the project being rated alpha priority by the Government. It's an all too familiar story. Yet again myopic Governmental penny-pinching has wasted British effort and ingenuity.

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© Future Publishing Ltd
4 QUEEN ST, BATH, BA1 1EJ
TEL: 0225 446034 • FAX 0225 446019 Printed by Redwood Web Offset, Trowbridge, Wilts
Distributed by Comag, West Drayton, Middx

Computer 'spycatcher' faces hacking lawsuit

• *Stoll: Trouble*

The American computer user who claims to have exposed a German ring of KGB hackers faces being sued for contempt of court.

Clifford Stoll from Berkeley University in California managed to track down a group of hackers by monitoring some discrepancies in the college's computer networks (*Express* 19). The hackers were allegedly using the school's network as a gateway to networks containing important information. They are then said to have passed secrets on to the Soviet Union.

However, a book written by Stoll explaining his activities is causing trouble. German hacker Marcus Hess says the book will prejudice his trial should the case come to a hearing. The book, *Cuckoo in the Nest*, states that the author has proof of Hess's guilt. Hess's lawyers say this could affect any chances of a fair trial.■

TROUBLED EPYX HITS HARD TIMES

Troubled American software publisher Epyx has offloaded most of its staff in an effort to stay afloat.

The firm says it will now operate as a development house rather than as an international software publisher. Epyx, once one of the largest games houses in the world, has been suffering for the past year from increased competition and the general console squeeze.

• *Lynx: Great hope*

It shot to success here with titles such as *Summer Games*, *Winter Games*, *California Games* and *Impossible Mission*. Those games were sold here through US Gold and were partly responsible for the success of that company.

A year ago Epyx sought to strengthen its position via a link up with French publisher Infogrames. That partnership quietly broken up (*Express* 17). Infogrames was less impressed with Epyx than it had been before the merger. This news appears to vindicate the decision to split.

Epyx is also responsible for the remarkable Lynx Atari handheld games machine. It is thought that Epyx had hoped to sell the machine itself but financial restrictions forced a sale to Atari.

Epyx will continue for now developing software for the handheld and for other consoles. Home computer software will be bought up both here and in the United States from other publishers.

Nobody from Epyx was prepared to comment on the matter.■

Lend me seven grand

British computer manufacturer Research Machines is following in the footsteps of compatriot Apricot by announcing the launch of the second machine to use Intel's new i486 chip.

The RM VX486 offers twice the performance of the fastest 386 machines for the same price - around the £7000 mark. The i486 combines on a single chip the functions of a 386 and 387 maths co-processor along with a RAM cache. The new 486 also has a reduced instruction set whilst retaining full 8088 compatibility without the need for time-consuming emulation routines.

• *RM 486: Weighty*

At this price/performance, the VX486 is expected to compete with American Unix-based engineering workstations. Indeed, Research Machines looks set to make an even greater impression on CAD (Computer Aided Design) - since it already has 22% of the market.

Running at 10 MIPS minimum, the VX486 comes with either DOS, OS/2 or Unix configured operating systems and a CPU rated at 25Mhz. Upto 16 Mbytes of RAM can be specified, operating through a 32-bit memory bus.

Research Machines has sold some 6500 microcomputer networks throughout the UK supporting some 68,000 stations.■

Computer doesn't understand Mrs T.

Prime minister Margaret Thatcher came face to face with the latest in Japanese technology during her trip to the Far East and watched it make a complete hash of things.

The machine's inventors could only watch in horror as the supposedly brilliant device made complete fools of them. The multi language computer is designed to translate Japanese into English in a matter of seconds.

On her visit to a Mishima factory Maggie was invited to speak into the machine. However, when she did it churned out a load of baffling gibberish. Mrs. T said into the mike: "It is an honour and a pleasure to visit this company today." The computer's translation was: "This company's having visit today of me is honourable." On its second attempt the million pound machine said: "I think the visit today in this company in honour."

Maggie praised the technicians for attempting a very difficult project and tactfully suggested that the brain is still the best computer of all.

Not so tactful was Beeb journo David Powers who suggested that she might have the same problem getting the Japanese to understand her trading proposals. She snapped: "It is your brain which is not computing right."■

SNIPPETS SNIPPETS

As first predicted here Virgin/ Mastertronic has opted for a £5.99 budget price for 16-bit games....

Kuma's K-Roget thesaurus for the PC, ST and Amiga is to be sold at £20 until Christmas. The package usually costs £50...

Techies everywhere can look forward to ArgAsm from Argonaut. Producer Argonaut is calling it "an incredibly fast" integrated Editor/Assembler for 1Mg Amiga machines...

Texan PC manufacturer CompuAdd has launched a series of "low profile" PCs from £549 to £1549...

Slightly bonkers footballer Vinny Jones is to appear in a computer games courtesy of Screen 7. Vinny Jones' Soccer Spectacular should arrive at the end of this year.

Bog standard?

Now scientists in Japan are working on a computerised toilet which can automatically perform health checks every time you go to the loo.

Sensors in the toilet can analyse urine, weight and even blood pressure. If anything is amiss the results come up on a display panel and are transferred down telephone lines to remote computer centres which then notify your doctor.

The work is being undertaken by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone and Japan's leading lavatory manufacturer Toto.

● 'We'll bash Amstrad' claim

OLIVETTI LOW COST PCs BURST THROUGH

Olivetti, one of Europe's largest PC manufacturers, has launched a series of low cost PCs boasting good specifications.

The new entry level XT model runs at 10MHz and costs £599 for the single floppy version going up to £1,199 for a 20Mb version with colour monitor. The machine has three slots, standard ports and VGA graphics. It is expected that a free maintenance deal will also be offered to buyers.

PC buyers looking for speed are being pitched with the new 286 machines. The low cost 1Mb version PCS286 runs at 12MHz and costs £999 for a twin floppy. Those with more to spend might be tempted by the £1,499 machine with 40Mb and colour monitor.

Not for the first time the Italian manufacturer has decided to gun for those buyers contemplating an Amstrad PC. The firm scored something of a success with its £399 PC1 which was launched in 1987. That was sold in Amstrad stronghold retail outlets such as Dixons.

A spokesman for the firm said: "We are aiming for the budget conscious man on the street. These are completely new machines that are set up as Amstrad bashers." Confident Olivetti hopes to sell 50,000 of the machines this year.

• Olivetti: New low cost offensive

Real 'thinking' computers: new breakthrough

Hitachi in America has developed a neural network system by linking integrated circuits on a five-inch silicon wafer that bring the advent of 'intelligent' chips nearer.

Each chip has 12 neurons giving a CMOS wafer with 576 neurons. Chips down the centre of the wafer act as a data bus. The system works 100,000 times faster than current supercomputers.

Hitachi claims the breakthrough will speed the arrival of 'fifth generation' computers which will be able to learn and think.

Neural networks are designed on similar lines to the human brain and can 'learn' by experience without needing to be programmed. Hitachi's news comes a week after warnings by Welsh researchers – whose research has so far only managed single neuron networks because of lack of funds – that Britain is falling behind in artificial intelligence research.

IBM tools up

Programming has by tradition been a long and intricate process requiring heavy attention to detail. But now, after much research, computer giant IBM has announced a development in programming methodology which is set to take the programming world by storm.

The company has designed a set of programming rules to be known as the Applications Development/Cycle for use in the writing and testing of computer software. There's also a dozen new software tools to support the method. One in particular, the Vitual Software Factory written by Bournemouth software house Systematica, has been given full backing by IBM.

Although using scientific programming methodologies is not a new development - software engineering has been around since the '70s - IBM believes that Applications Development/Cycle will solve many of the problems associated with programming such as bugs, delivery over time etc. IBM Vice President Mr George Conrades said "Today's Application Development/Cycle announcements will dramatically speed up the development of applications that will enhance our customer's competitiveness."

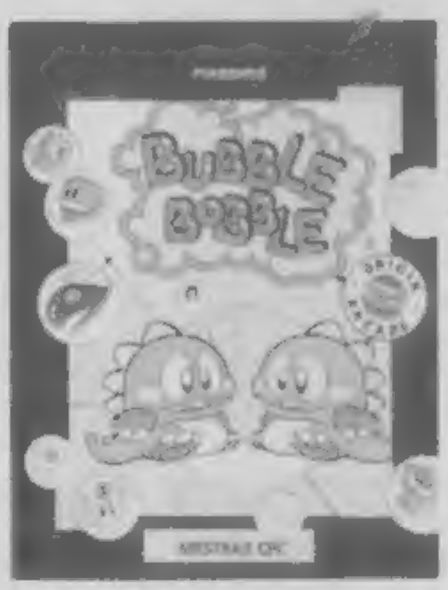
But its not all sweetness and light. IBM says its customers will have to make significant changes to their programming and design policies in order to benefit from the new methods.

Clash of the Taito

The future of *Rainbow Island*, MicroProse's follow up to the massively successful *Bubble Bobble*, was in doubt last week as the software house attempted to heal a rift with coin-op manufacturer Taito.

The game is a sure fire success having wowed games players in the arcades. The cutesy style of *Bubble Bobble* and its successor appeals to a wide section of gamers.

However, ownership of the rights of the game are in dispute. Taito originally sold the licence to Telecomsoft. That company's labels (Firebird and Rainbird) were bought out by MicroProse earlier this year. The deal does not necessarily cover previous agreements with third parties.



• Bubble Bobble: Follow up blocked

Taito has put a block on MicroProse releasing the game (due out at the end of this month) saying that it has never recognised MicroProse as the licensee. To make matters worse MicroProse has spent money on the development of the game and is not prepared to hand over the source code without a fight.

The two company's have reached a deadlock with 'Prose holding on to the code and Taito blocking its release. A MicroProse spokesman told *Express*: "We've got the game finished but Taito are messing about. There are high level talks going on and we just want to come to a satisfying conclusion. We know the game is going to be massive because it's just as addictive as *Bubble Bobble*."

Taito's Grant Freerks commented: "We hold the rights to the game. We made an agreement with British Telecom; not MicroProse." He would not comment on whether Taito is in negotiations with another software publisher for the game. Either way, a delayed launch is almost certain.

Damocles word

Damocles, the follow up to Paul Woakes' hit *Mercenary*, is ready and should be arriving in the shops within two weeks.

The game has been under development for years but publisher Novagen claims the wait will be worth it. Boss Bruce Jordan said: "It's completely over the top, but a real result." The three dimensional extravaganza will be out on the ST and Amiga costing £24.95. PC owners will have to wait just a wee bit longer.

• Damocles: Long time coming

Virus busters save network

Denmark's massive governmental computer network Postgiro has been attacked by a vicious virus.

Operators of the network managed to track down the nasty program which could have denied thousands of people their social security cheques. An operator came across the code late one Friday night and a virus busting team was called in. It took twenty of them all weekend to clear up the virus which had affected 260 PCs

A special program has now been written as an antidote to the virus. Postgiro is the largest computer network in Scandinavia.

Rule Britanica - now on CD-ROM

The world famous Encyclopaedia Britanica is to be transferred to a remarkable PC CD-ROM disk.

The £450 collection of books takes up five feet of software but Britanica Software in New York has placed the lot onto one tiny disk. The company realised that even with all the thousands of facts and figures on the disk there was still room for more. So animations, digitised speech and music have also been thrown on.

For instance, anyone calling up the Richard Nixon file will be treated to his digitised voice saying: "I am not a crook." And some parts of the anatomy are represented in animations (the heart beating for example).

Anyone looking to find out about Mozart will be played some of his music. The little disk costs $895. A British version is expected soon.

PSION PC UNLEASHED

Another Express Exclusive

Psion this week launched three new laptop machines one of which is fully PC compatible.

The Psion Mobile Computers are the size of an A4 pad and two inches thick. Both weigh just over four pounds. As widely expected the machines boast a longer lasting battery life – they can run for up to 75 hours on one set of batteries.

The MC200 and MC400 machines use Psion's proprietary graphics interface whilst the MC600 can run MS/DOS. ■ have a clamshell design and a Hitachi designed film liquid crystal display.

"Working with Intel and Microsoft we have developed a solid state disk which sets new industry standards," said founder David Potter. "In addition we have designed our own full custom chip to monitor and control power consumption."

It is expected that the low power consumption will feature heavily ■ the firm's £750,000 advertising campaign.

Also, the 200 and 400 models can store sampled speech in ■ built in sound sampler. This allows you to record, compress and store up to an hour of human speech using only 300K of memory.

A fast serial link which will allow transfer of text and other data at 100 times the speed of standard RS232 has been included with the PC compatible MC600.

"Mobile computing is the technology for the future," added potter. "I believe these launched will help to re-shape people's attitudes towards computers."■

Soccer stats

Football statisticians watch out. There's a new public domain program for the ST which includes the details of every England player from 1880 to the present day.

Lovers of footie facts and figures can get stuck into this database by calling Goodmans on 0782 335650. It details every player's club and scoring record from England debut to retirement. It also includes a simple pools predictor.■

Archie reaches for the sky

A new flight simulation has been launched for the Archimedes with publisher Clares calling the Acorn machine "ideal for simulation fans".

Interdictor ■ claimed to be faster than any flight sim on other home computers. The combat game does not use sprites to define enemy targets and aircraft which are all described as "simulations in their own right".

Interdictor has been written with the new superfast ARM 3 chip set taken into account. "That won't make the plane ■ any faster, that's not what people want," said boss Dave Clare. "But the screen update is amazingly fast and smooth. Anyone who really wants the best in flight simulations should look carefully at the Archimedes.

Interdictor costs £34.95 and is compatible with the new A3000. More on 0606 48511.■

APPLE'S MULTIMEDIA DREAM

Andy Storer reports on Apple's extraordinary portable

Last week, in a simultaneous launch spanning fifty countries, Apple unveiled its long awaited Mac Portable.

Costing £4595 the lightweight laptop comes with a 68000 chip running at 16Mhz – twice the speed of the Mac Plus and SE. Its IMb RAM is expandable up to 9 Mb. The Portable also incorporates a 1.44 Mb disc drive, allowing it to directly read, write and format MS-DOS and OS/2 disks.

Control is achieved through the built-in tracker ball or mouse. The Portable ■ compatible with ■ Mac applications, even those requiring colour, and comes with an optional 40Mb hard disk for an extra £575.

Replaceable lead acid battery life is estimated at up ■ 10 hours, and an international mains power adaptor ■ included. Seven external ports accomodate input and output peripherals and full Apple networking is afforded by the LocalTalk serial ports. A 2400 baud modem is also available.

• The Laptop: Apple's revolutionary creation

Curiously, pre-launch trials were conducted by the Civil Aviation Authority and The Royal Air Force though the machine's impressive sound-handling would suggest it's more geared toward multimedia work. This extraordinary machine's custom 8-bit digital audio chip provides stereo sampling ■ up to 44KHz and 4 channel sound output capable of driving hi-fi or other stereo equipment through its built-in sound jack.

The inclusion of ■ video port designed to drive external monitors, video projection systems and overhead viewplates along with the bundling of the multimedia 'front-end' HyperCard, makes the portable more of a media control unit than a traditional text-processing laptop. ■

French "pirates" sunk

A British company has teamed up with French police in an effort to bring down an alleged counterfeiting operation in Paris.

GST Software Products' former French distributor was raided earlier this month by police who seized a large number of software packages. GST says the company, Wings Micro Electronics, had been copying its Timeworks Publisher products for the PC and ST and selling them as legitimate products.

The firm, run by two brothers, are claimed to have redesigned the packag- ■ completely.

Up until March ■ this year Wings had been the sole distributor of the Timeworks range ■ France. "We became suspicious after they started ordering less and less packages from us. Our sales manager went over to have a look," said GST's Joanna King. "We started talking to a Paris based solicitor who organised the raid."

It is not yet known how the affair will be tied up although an out of court settlement is a strong possibility. ■

Coupe scoops games

Prospective SAM Coupe owners worried about lack of software might take heart from the latest from manufacturer MGT.

Three leading software houses have pledged their support for the machine. US Gold's *Strider*, Code Masters' *Dizzy* ■ and System 3's *Myth* are all set to arrive taking advantage of the Coupe's graphics and six channel synthesizer.

The machine can run Speccy software but as yet publishers have been cautious about spending money developing software which can take advantage of the new tech specs.

MGT reckons the games will be as good as those on the ST. Expect to see more publishers jumping on board.■

Sage's word

Sage has launched version three of its famous word processing package PC Write.

Boasting more than 500 new features the revamped program will allow users to create files ■ large as the DOS memory of their computer (should anyone want to bother) and can link files up. It's also been rejigged for better handling of columns and has a faster spell checker. Sage is one of the UK's biggest business software outfit and can be contacted ■ 091 213 1555. Version ■ costs £99.■.

Mum's the word

IBM and Apple aren't as heartless as one might have thought. The two firms have been voted in the top ten American companies which are nicest to mums.

Apple runs a free child care centre for all employees with young kids and gives a $500 bonus to any mums who have new deliveries. And IBM will give up to three years free leave to parents.■

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THE SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS

SECOND-HAND N

You can save a fortune by buying second hand, but what are the pitfalls and what's a fair price. Jerry Glenwright puts on his auctioneer's hat

Why buy a second hand computer? Apart from the obvious savings to be had, microcomputers are very hardy beasts and, unlike second-hand cars, cameras, videos etc., hardly ever go wrong, which means that you can buy a popular home computer such as the Commodore Amiga or Atari ST and make a considerable saving. Alternatively, if you have a specific purpose in mind for your machine you may be able to buy one of the older, 'obsolete' home micros of yesteryear for a fraction of the original price and have a usable system and some money left over to buy the software.

Many of the eight-bit computers can be had complete with a monitor, disk drives and a mountain of software for next to nothing as the owner tries desperately to get rid of what they see as a useless space-taker since they swallowed the hype and bought the latest 16/32-bit mega-machine. They're usually happy with a few quid to offset the purchase of the new computer.

For example, grubbing about in the *Express* classifieds for the last few weeks, I managed to turn up an Atari ST complete with 1Mb floppy drive, lots of software and books for £240, an Apple II with twin drives, monitor and software for £150, an Amiga A500 with 1084 colour monitor and lots of software for £500 and various modems, monitors and printers at give-away prices.

Several advertisers had eight-bit machines such as the Commodore 64, Spectrum and CPC for sale, all at well under £100, most with software and peripherals.

Many people who would otherwise consider the purchase of a second-hand micro are a little worried about what happens if the machine does go wrong. What rights do they have? Can they demand the return of their money? Unfortunately if you buy a computer from someone who advertised the machine in a magazine classified ad, newsagent's window etc., take it home and it doesn't work then you have no comeback. Zilch, zero, nothing. You can't ask for your money back, you're stuck with the machine. There's absolutely nothing you can do. It's up to you to try out the computer and test it before handing over your hard-earned and taking it home.

Sold as seen

The legal position concerning the purchase of second-hand computers from dealers is a little different. If you get the computer home and find that it doesn't work then you can take it back to the shop and demand your money back. Goods sold by traders have to be fit for the purpose sold – in the case of computers, computing. However, if the machine works fine at first then breaks down after a couple of weeks, it's unlikely that you'll be able to secure the return of your cash. Although there are no hard and fast rules detailing how long a computer should work before falling outside the responsibility of the seller, in practise a court would be unlikely to allow any more than a couple of weeks before deeming the maintenance of the machine your responsibility.

So, what's the moral of the story? Try machines before you buy them – simple enough, right? Don't buy any computer that you haven't had the opportunity to see running, unless it is incredibly cheap (and then ask yourself why it's incredibly cheap).

OK, you've spotted a likely looking computer in an advert in *Express*, arranged with the owner to go along and have a look at the machine, what should you go armed with? What knowledge do you need to ensure that a prospective computer is fit for the purpose? Well all you really need is a modicum of common sense. If you're not allowed to see the computer running put your purse away.

You've switched on the machine and all seems to be well. Try booting up a program from disk and watching it run. Listen to the drives, any clicks or clunks? Maybe the stepper motors of the drive are reaching the end of their useful life. Try all the keys of the keyboard and watch the resulting characters on the screen. All present and correct? Tinker with the monitor. Adjust the colour, contrast, brightness controls etc., and listen carefully to output from the speaker. Try saving files to the disk drive. Any DOS error reports? There may be something wrong with the drive cables, interface or heads. Turn the computer over and have a look for signs of the case having been opened. Perhaps it's already had to have repairs carried out, in which case you might be better off buying elsewhere.

Finally, if all appears well with the system, take a look at the seller. Sure, they're going to be a little nervous and certainly anxious to make a sale (after all, that's why you're there) but do they look like they're trying to hide something? It's difficult to tell wheteer your dealing with a confirmed criminal or a genuine nince guy but a glance at your host may make you think twice about handing them your cash.

NEWS

Under the gavel

The classified sections of this and other magazines are likely places to begin your search for a second-hand micro but wouldn't it be nice if you could have a good look at the computer before having to negotiate the price with the seller? An uninterrupted grub about can often turn up faults that a cursory glance under the watchful eye of the owner will fail to locate. The auction fulfills this basic need to examine. All auctioneers lay out the equipment at the chosen venue, open the doors an hour or two before the auction is scheduled to start and let you open boxes, lift lids and generally make a pest of yourself without any limitations short of complete machine strip-downs.

Computer equipment sold at auction can be bought for incredibly small sums (although occasionally several punters covet the same device and the price can rocket), the auctioneers are usually reputable and at least one will return your money within a reasonable amount of time if you're unhappy with your purchase.

For dates and locations try calling John Russel & Co. on 01 681 5413, Traderdesk Computer Brokers and Auctioneers on 0527 579120 or MCD Auctioneers 0276 692260.

Hot stuff

Official estimates put the total of stolen micros in the second hand market at a massive 40%. If this estimate is to be believed, there's almost an evens chance of the second hand micro you buy being a stolen machine. Lousy odds, right?

What happens if you buy a computer from someone who appears to be reputable and a couple of days later there's the heavy hand of the law making free with the scruff of your neck? Unfortunately, the police may choose to incriminate you in the theft of the computer, even if you made the purchase in good faith. In practise, they will usually make a decision based upon you, your character and the likelihood of your knowledge of the theft. You may get away with the proverbial flea in the ear.

The bottom line

Follow the precautions, buy wisely and you stand to save a large amount of what little money you have stashed away for a rainy day. The second hand computer market is flourishing and it really is a buyers market. Take a look at our chart and all the publications carrying small ads and compare prices. In this way you will be aware of the reasonable maximum you should have to pay and won't get ripped off.●

COMPUTER	PRICE NEW	SECOND-HAND PRICE 18 MTHS	3 YRS	5YRS	COMMENTS
Archimedes 440	£2871	£1895			Highly desirable
Archimedes 310	£1031	£680			The standard Archie
Archimedes 3000	£744	£450			You'll be lucky
Acorn Electron	n/a			£20	Runs Beeb software
Amiga 500	£400	£260			Vastly popular
Amiga 1000	n/a	£400			Good machine - discontinued
Amiga 2000	£1295	£850			Expensive and expandable
Amstrad 1512	Varied	£150			Holds its price
Amstrad 1640	Varied	£250			Good second-hand buy
Amstrad 2086	£689	£550			3.5-inch disk model of 1640
Amstrad 2286	£999	£650			Beleaguered PC
Amstrad 464	£200	£130			Under-rated
Amstrad 6128	£300	£200			Larger RAM version
Amstrad PCW8256	£349	£230	£200		Good word processor
Amstrad PCW8512	£449	£300	£250		Higher-powered PCW
Amstrad PCW9512	£499	£330	£250		Daisy-wheel printer
Atari 520 ST	n/a			£150	Lots of software
Atari 520 STM	£299	£190			TV based ST
Atari 520 STFM	£399	£260			ST plus disk drive
Atari 1040 (All guises)	£499	£320			Enough RAM for DTP
Atari 400	n/a			£10	First eight-bit
Atari 800	n/a			£30	Excellent keyboard
Atari 600 XL	n/a			£10	Poor memory quotient
Atari 800 XL	n/a			£30	Lots of software
Atari 130 XE	£119	£80			Still on sale
BBC II	n/a		£200		A desirable computer that still holds its price
BBC Master	£503	£330			Overpriced
Commodore Vic	n/a			£10	Good for model train control, radio ham etc
Commodore 64	£150	£100			Still very popular
Commodore 128	n/a		£60		Bargains to be had
Dragon 32	n/a			£10	Only a tenner
Dragon 64	n/a			£35	With OS/9 a useful machine
IBM PC	n/a			£230	Popular, but good second-hand deals possible
IBM XT	n/a		£500		Standard for the marque
IBM AT	n/a		£800		Hard disk, faster chip
Jupiter Ace	n/a			£25	Interesting Forth micro
Mac plus	£999	£600			Expensive
Mac SE	£1735	£1000			Rad micro for fat wallets
Oric 1 Oric Atmos	n/a n/a			£20 £15	Hardened techies and those under restraint only
Spectrum 48	n/a			£25	Still popular
Spectrum +2	£149	£100			Reasonable spec
Spectrum +3	£199	£130			The entire Spectrum range is still a popular first buy and the machines continue to hold their price
Sinclair QL	n/a			£80	Interesting 68008-based computer for techies and Sir Clive fans

THE NEW KING OF

Surely there's no market for another outdated eight-bit machine? But that's what they said about the PCW. Jerry Glenwright is suitably impressed with the SAM Coupé

At long last the SAM Coupé has reached the market place. First discussed way back in early '86, this Spectrum clone with bells and whistles received its official launch last week. Amid the popping of champagne corks and hearty backslapping, the gentlepersons of the press watched with baited breath as the SAM performed a series of decidedly mediocre demonstrations involving the plotting of BASIC functions, displaying 'stolen' Atari ST graphics screens and mimicking train whistles and the wind.

A short history lesson

Miles Gordon Technology, the company responsible for the SAM Coupé have a long history in the production of Spectrum peripherals. Beginning with joystick interfaces, monitor leads and so forth, directors Alan Miles and Bruce Gordon decided that the time was ripe to design and market a computer that would provide the home market with a powerful machine exploiting the best in existing technology at a price that would win over all but the most hardened one brand buyer. At that time - and to this day - the Spectrum had a huge share of the market in terms of software quantity and as applications availability is the make or break of any computer (witness the demise of the Oric, Dragon, QL *et al* in the last five years) MGT decided to produce a computer that could run Spectrum software, giving it a huge existing software base, yet to improve the Spectrum specification beyond recognition.

The plan met with hoots of derision in the computer press. Computer hacks everywhere took it upon themselves to laugh at the idea of a Spectrum clone and no-one expected it to reach the market. MGT soldiered on and now several years after the Coupé's first announcement, SAM is here.

Under the skin

Touted as the first all-British computer to hit the home market in five years, the SAM Coupé is a 'second generation' home micro sporting a Z80B central processor running at a fast 6MHz. MGT have designed an eight-bit computer with enough power to really compete with the 16-bit market, yet at a price which makes the machine a definite option for the first time or upgrade buyer.

Just what's lurking inside Sam's case? As well as the six meg Z80B there's a 10,000 gate custom chip - the ASIC - which handles control of the machine. One of the primary functions of ASIC is as a graphics processor determining the output from the Motorola MC1377P video chip. In this role it provides four screen modes. Beginning (not surprisingly) with mode 1: 32 x 24 screen cells, a 16 from 128 colour palette and Spectrum-compatible attribute display, progressing to mode 2: same as mode 1 but with 32 x 192 cells; mode 3: 80 column text display, 512 x 192 pixels and 4 colours from 128, to mode 4: 256 x 192 pixels sporting 16 colours from a palette of 128.

The ASIC chip is also responsible for such mundane tasks as memory paging, input/output, colour palette allocation and processor/video contention. ASIC is a complete in-house design of which MGT are justly proud.

Rather than plump for the old-hat AY sound chip which can be found in a variety of home micros from the BBC to the Atari ST, MGT decided that good sound generation was a must for a machine intended to conquer the home market. To this end, the company installed the Philips SAA1099 sound chip into the SAM. The chip offers stereo sound via six channels over eight octaves. There's envelope wave shaping and each channel has individual volume control. Plenty of scope for games programmers looking to design the ultimate in sound tracks, explosions etc.

Many of the original home computers suffered from a severe lack of expandability. When I/O was provided it was usually in the form of some obscure machine-specific interface meaning that you had to buy an expensive device from the company responsible for the machine before you could make use of it. Machines such as the ST and Amiga did away with all that, shipping as standard with proper serial, monitor and other interfaces. The SAM Coupé is in the same league with RS232, monitor (consisting of composite video and RGB) in the form of a SCART socket, joystick and mouse/lightpen ports and a fully-featured MIDI port – a big plus for a machine in this price range. One of the big selling features of Atari's ST is the MIDI interface. Muscians who would otherwise have steered clear of a computer bought the machine and experimented. The SAM is half the price of the ST, and the MIDI port will be a big plus for musicians looking for a computer to perform their creations.

Also built in is a socket to allow SAMs to be linked together in a network.

Future markets

The most damning criticism of the SAM Coupé has been the length of time it's taken to reach the market place. Even when first discussed, the SAM was generally thought to be old hat. Who could possibly want a computer based in yesterday's technology, running yesterday's software?

The computer industry along with fast cars, cigarettes and throbby motorcycles pitches its advertising at those sections of the buying public who feel inferior unless they own the latest hi-fi, biggest motorcycle, fastest car. The computer press panders to this notion and the consequence is that any computer not bearing the latest 16-bit processor is automatically assigned to the scrap heap. Unfortunately 16-bit computers come with 16-bit prices and not everyone can afford them.

MGT has used cheap silicon bits and pieces in order to build a computer offering a large number of features at a price which is unmatched for the specification. The Z80B is almost given away,

BACK TO BASICS

The power quotient of the original home computers such as the TI99/4a, Dragon, Oric etc., was measured in terms of BASIC language performance – which BASIC could perform loops, screen plotting and calculations the fastest. Nowadays, we've – thankfully – passed on from the vagaries of a prospective machine's BASIC. But BASIC is still the foremost language for novice programmers and although the BASIC shouldn't unduly effect your decision to buy a computer, it's wise to examine the language supplied with any machine.

SAM's BASIC has benefitted from several years of language design and improvement. No longer the archaic, limited language of yesteryear, BASIC is now replete with functions, subroutines, CASE statements etc., in fact everything necessary for 'proper' structured programming.

Programs may be up to 217K in length and line numbers up to 61439 are allowed. There's plenty of structured programming features in the form of DO, LOOP, REPEAT, UNTIL, ON ERROR and a CASE statement. There are a range of pre-programmed sound effects available directly from BASIC and 56 built-in functions covering maths and string-handling, mouse handling, string and hex searches and more. You can convert easily between hex and decimal numbering systems and programs can be re-numbered easily. SAM BASIC is a language which will painlessly initiate the novice as well as providing everything for the talented advanced programmer.

F THE EIGHT-BITS

keyboard is a cheap membrane-based device and the drives - although innovative - are made by Citizen. MGT has a distribution deal with Citizen's products and gets the drives at a 'lower than otherwise' price.

The intended markets for the SAM are home and educational. Excellent sound and graphics and a fast processor provide everything necessary for a super home games machine. Speed, colour and sound is the life blood of shoot-'em-ups. Musicians won't find a cheaper introduction to MIDI and as a computer for the classroom the SAM is unparalleled. In these days of Government education cuts, schools are finding budget balancing very difficult. The Coupé, with its built-in local area network, large memory and very competitive price has to be a first choice for pedagogues everywhere.

Miles Gordon Technology is also looking seriously at Asia as a possibly source of revenue. Traditionally lacking in high technology, MGT feels that with such a cheap computer it should be able to tap an almost virgin market. By 1991 the company hopes to be selling in excess of 250,000 models worldwide.

And finally

Don't write off the SAM Coupé just because it's an eight bit machine. Under the skin there's everything necessary for the computer to be a viable indeed, preferable, alternative to the 16-bit machines. MGT has a sound reputation in the micro industry and some very capable engineers under its roof. The length of time for the machine to reach the market has ensured design flaws have been ironed out, whilst new prices and technology have been built in. Spectrum compatibility means that there's an enormous range of existing software covering everything from super games to education to business to such sublime tasks as radio ham and model control. You can also use existing Spectrum compatible hardware and peripherals such as the Plus D and Disciple disk drives - indeed, the launch demonstration machine featured a Plus D disk drive.

Features like local area networking and built-in MIDI ports set the Coupé apart from its cousins the CPC and Spectrum, and are areas where machines of two or three times the price could take note. Its low price opens up markets like education and professional music where previously the high cost of equipment is a limiting factor. Given efficient marketing and distribution there is no reason why the SAM Coupé should not get the success it deserves. Over coming its 'too late' image could be the first problem MGT have to overcome.

At £150 the SAM is a computer which deserves consideration by anyone looking for their first or next machine.●

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

- Z80B eight-bit central processor running at six megahertz
- 256K RAM expandable to 512K on the motherboard
- Six-channel stereo sound with individual volume and envelope control
- Four screen modes ranging between 32 x 24 pixels and 512 x 192 pixels with a pallet of 128 colours
- RGB/Composite monitor port
- Joystick port
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- Excellent manual with many illustrations

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EXPRESS MAIL

Dear Reader

Another collection ■ comment, controversy, compliments ■ and Rob Ainsley's replies. Have your got something to say? Make your voice heard in computing's liveliest letters page! Send your contributions to: Express Mail, 4 Queen Street, Bath, Avon BA1 1EJ

PS. Sorry, but we just don't have the time to give personal replies, whether you include an sae or not. We're too busy putting Express together!

AMSTRAD: HELD BACK BY THE KNOCKERS?

I am the proud owner of an Amstrad 1512 PC: plastic and some say flimsy but as I am not throwing it around the room, what does that matter? Some people complain of the noise produced by the disk drive; well I have just installed a second 720K 3.5-inch drive purchased from an independent manufacturer and I can assure you that the Amstrad drive is silent compared to this piece of fair ground machinery

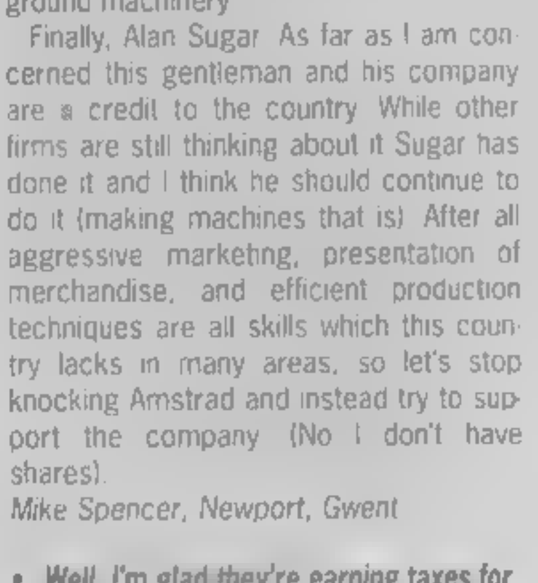
Finally, Alan Sugar As far as I am concerned this gentleman and his company are a credit to the country While other firms are still thinking about it Sugar has done it and I think he should continue to do it (making machines that is) After all aggressive marketing, presentation of merchandise, and efficient production techniques are all skills which this country lacks in many areas, so let's stop knocking Amstrad and instead try to support the company (No I don't have shares).

Mike Spencer, Newport, Gwent

• Well, I'm glad they're earning taxes for the country etc., but remember that Amstrad's sole intention, by their own admission, is ■ make money, not produce good value machines - this appears to happen incidentally.

The company doesn't endear itself to the press because of ■ obsessive hatred of the media and determination not to help any journalists at any time. Like the West Indies fast bowling attack, Amstrad is aggressive, unpleasant to face, and perpetually tries to get you caught out (by its lawyers).

What is odd is that its share price is at a four-year low and yet its profit per person is among the top ten in the country, and the company is still making millions a year.



• Alan Sugar: West Indian fast bowler? No, a credit to his country, says Mike Spencer

HOLY NETWORK, BATMAN

In Express 44 Paul Gregg complained about the security of his school Nimbus network, but his tip is almost useless because, in most colleges, the server is kept locked away in a separate room, along with all external drives

He's right, though, when he says the system is full of holes (is this why it's called a NETwork)? If a public utility allows you to enter DOS (such as Microsoft WORD or BBC BASIC) then you have access ■ every user directory

Problems arise if the directories are secure users. One way to gain access in this case ■ to use BBC BASIC to create a massive empty file which when read, and ■ the non-ASCII characters discarded, will probably contain the actual passwords, the system passwords and the system short-names The latter two are particularly interesting because when used with the 'USE' command from DOS (usually well documented with a nice helpful text file!) they allow you to log other users onto your directory. This allows you full access ■ ■ their programs and information, and if they happen ■ be the net manager then the skies the limit!

■ this almost renders the password entry system a waste of time and effort. I've been deliberately vague describing a way of screwing the system, but it's ■ stuff that an average A-level student would find out eventually This means that no program or 'personal' document ■ safe.

I know that Nimbus must know all this, and I know that cracking an education network ■ a pretty juvenile thing to do, but a password entry system should be unbreachable! Students want the piece of mind that their data is safe. I hope that if this is published then Nimbus will finally think about upgrading their network security (or maybe our college will scrap the Network and buy a few Macs!).

Mike Donaldson, Bransholme, Hull

• Passwords are often too easy ■ guess anyway: at Future Publishing's Christmas Party last year, the booking computer was left running in one of the bars, a recipe for disaster with a roomful of drunken computer journos. Hacking in was easy (the password was QWERTY) and soon some of the Future guests staying that night had laundry bills of £1,000,000. But if your system is so leaky that even a 'proper' password (as long as possible and using non-alphanumeric characters like - and = and %) can be cracked, well, then, er, something must be done.

I COUNTED THEM OUT

I don't want to get into the "my computer's better than yours" syndrome due to the fact the I've got a BBC ■. But as an Acorn supporter and hopefully an Archie owner in the not too distant future, I feel that many people are being unfair due to the purported lack of software for the Archie.

Here is a quick run down of what is available: Desktop publishers - 7 good ones plus ■ half-width and 3 A4 scanners; Art packages - 10 excluding Ray Tracers, 3D modellers ■ CAD packs; Languages - 12 others including Pascal, C, COBOL, FORTRAN; Word processors - ■ written specifically for the machine; BASIC Compilers - 3; Databases - ■; Spreadsheets - 5; MIDI Music and Sound Samplers - 8; Utilities - loads and of great variety. Educational - surprisingly lacking, probably around 15 specifically for the machine; Games - wait for it ... 64 with another 37 minimum out by Christmas

Why doesn't a great mag like Express feature more Archie stuff?

Alex Card, Aldeburgh, Suffolk

• We'd ■ happy to, though we think the user base is a bit small at the moment ■ give over more than the odd page (we'll be reviewing the new Archie DTP program when it comes out). The fortnightly Archie column will of course ■ going weekly when appropriate.

DRIVES ME MAD

For the third time now my ST drive has packed up on me, ■ in the course of one lousy year! Come on Atari, what are you playing at?

■ *Giles, London*

• It just seems you've been very unlucky - ST drives are on the whole very reliable. I don't suppose that's much consolation though.

COMING TO A HEAD

I write to express my anger and disgust ■ the picture printed on page 6 (Express 44) showing a severed head I expect that you think that it is all just a joke and wonder why I am making such a fuss.

I'm making a fuss, Mr Ainsley, because I trusted you . I trusted you to give me a magazine full of interesting articles and on the whole, pretty balanced views on computers. I did not expect to open my magazine and find that picture.

I was further offended at your "biblical quotes" at the end of the issue. I don't know where your spiritual position is, Mr Ainsley, but may I suggest that for your own sake you re-evaluate it.

Christine Walker, Surrey

• Sorry about that head; we didn't intend to shock anyone by publishing the news item and we apologise if what was genuinely meant as a joke genuinely offended you.

The Bible as it stands is riddled with inconsistencies and mistranslations, like this camel-going-through-the-eye-of-the-needle business. Surely it is in the interpretation ■ its contents in the light of our present-day lives, not the actual lists of people begetting each other and going around tending goats and stuff, that its message comes across. Well, we were just interpreting it to make it relevant ■ the reductive and often absurd world ■ computing, and hopefully make people smile in the process. So I'm afraid I'm not going ■ apologise at all. As far as I know there's no commandment that says 'thou shalt be dead miserable and have no sense of humour or you'll be in real trouble, you wait and see if you're not'.

ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND?

After your comments concerning the PC Engine ("Which of these is better for playing games?", letters, Express 45, and comments to replies to letters), I now avidly await the release of the first text adventure for the PC Engine...

Not all games are spawned in the arcades, you know.

NH Cole

• Text adventures are a thing of the past. Thank goodness. Roll on these virtual reality cybergames!

BALANCED VIEW

As an Amiga, PC Engine and Sega Megadrive owner I can only endorse your view that when it comes to games playing the Amiga falls far short of the Engine and Megadrive.

However no matter how good these machines may become for games playing, I cannot type letters like this on them, and for such pieces of software like KindWords 2, the Amiga and Atari ST stand in a world of their own.

Trevor Crone, London

• I'm sorry, Trevor, you can't ■ around writing reasoned and balanced letters like this. The letters page would ■ finished inside a month.

PURPLE ---PROSE

I am writing to you to see if a certain

INSULTS CORNER

If Amiga owners crawl ity seems to have eluded Amiga owners completely!
(Express 42) then al- Dominic J. Carr, With
can say is "it must be a ersea, East Yorkshire
bloody big corner com-
pared to the Archie
owners corner."
Wayne Hasford, Poole,
Dorset

I am not here to criti-
cize the Amiga, but
they are just upgraded
Commodore 64s.
Douglas Sharpies,
Bolton, Lancs

Archimedes is a fine machine, but who in their right mind is going to buy a computer with such little software support at such a high price?
Phillips, Lowdown, Yelland

The fact that the Archimedes beats the Amiga in all aspects of performance and abil- accept that the

Any more insults? Send them to: Bath Paper Recycling Co, Queen St, Bath BA1 1EJ.

software company, (M——prose) on seeing its name in print, will get off its backside, and resolve my problem.

I sent back a bugged version of 'Elite' for the ST that I bought. They have had my disk for nearly six weeks.
RD Bird, London

• Mr Bird lists all his phone calls and M--prose's put-offs and fob-offs, a few dozen in ■ over the six weeks. Perhaps M--prose would like to comment?

GOOD JOB I'M NOT BORING

Your rag (which I purchase regularly) along with the numerous other computer rags has one nagging fault which should be corrected: namely, you pander to the socially deficient and inadequate hardware bores.

The great Amiga, ST, PC, C64, Spectrum ad nauseam debate. This continual drone is the type of thing that leaves computer users at the mercy of the label makers, ■ bored press, bored psychologists etc.

The Freudian analogies that those, on the whole, humourless, friendless, sensationless and sexless, techno-freaks leave normal computer users (who I believe are in the majority) open to numerous tarrings of an unearned brush.

My manhood or reputation or feeling of identity doesn't depend on the number of bit planes or the multi-directional hardware scrolling that the hardware techno-freaks seem to get aroused about. My advice to the deficients is: sell your computer, buy a motorbike, motor car or skateboard, meet a girl and live life, not simulate it.
S Mcgill, London

• At college I wrote a revue sketch about the Norman Invasion. The Normans were not a Franco-Scandinavian army, but a group of train spotters and comms freaks all called Norman who invaded your sitting room and rattled incessantly on about steam trains and Telecom Gold, and who killed by boredom. Perhaps the denouement should have been to have someone coming on afterwards complaining about them, analysing their Freudian motives psychologically etc, but being just as boring.

CPC HERE

I am sick to death reading about the Amiga and Atari ST and how wonderful they are. When someone asks the machine to buy they are told one or the other.

Well my own system can do anything necessary that both these machines can and at a fraction of the price. I have a CPC 6128 and colour monitor with a 2nd 3.5" 1 meg drive, Rodos DOS on ROM, a drive switcher, Multiface II, and an Epson FX 80 printer. The software I have ■ Discology, Tasword, Protext and Mini Office.

The CPC runs CP/M plus and I have many public domain programs.

It would be interesting to compare the costs to get a similar system into operation on the Amiga. I have had the machine for five years and never had one problem. So let's hear from all of the so called powerful computer users, can you do better?
A happy CPC user

• Absolutely. Three cheers for the vastly underrated CPC!

PRICE PERFECT

Your recent assessment of word processor in Shopping Express contains an error and makes some assertions that we, and many users, would disagree with.

You quote a price of £250 whereas the list of WordPerfect 5.0 is £425. You make the price of WordPerfect the main theme of your assessment, yet the evidence of the market shows that people do not buy software on price alone. They buy the best, knowing that with WordPerfect they are investing in advanced functionality, free telephone support and regular low-cost upgrades.
David Godwin

• Marketing Manager, WordPerfect
Oops! Sorry we got the price wrong; change the value verdict of 'a disappointment for the huge price' to 'a disappointment for the incredibly huge price'. Our apologies.

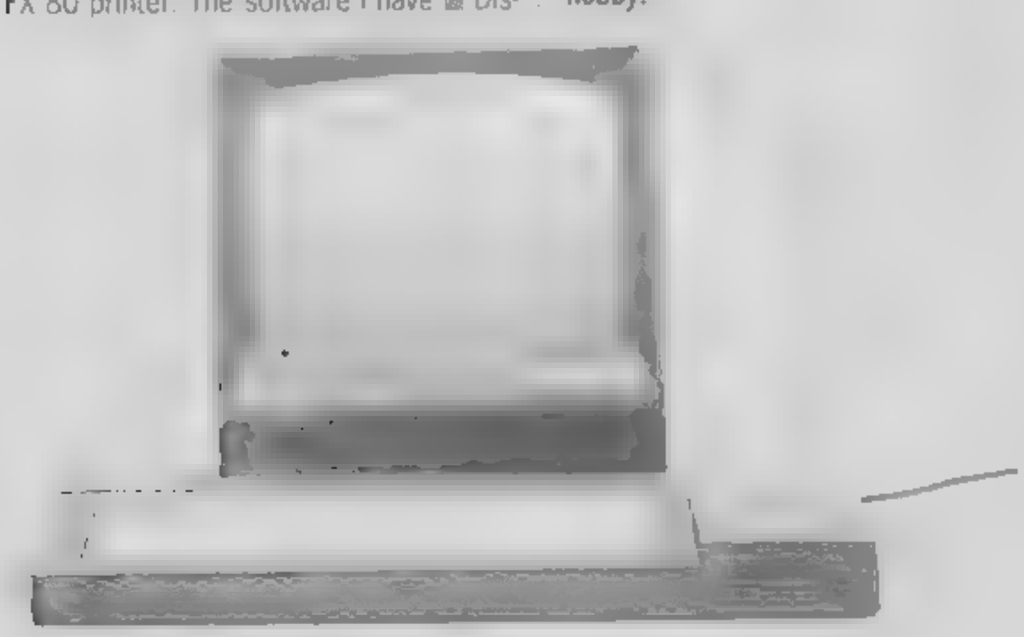
Free telephone support and regular low-cost upgrades are surely to be expected, not touted as some kind of bonus. Locomotive does them for LocoScript 2 on the PCW, which at £25 is seventeen times cheaper than WordPerfect.

PD OR NOT PD

I am thinking of making a PD software library. What do I need to get going? Do I need any licences or anything like that? What rules are there? Can I make a Profit? Will anyone stop me? Please answer the questions as my friends and I are very interested ■ starting PD. Can I put an ad ■ your free (cor blimey is it really free! They say that the best things ■ life are free!) classifieds?
Timo Newton-Syms, Bucks

• The answers are: nothing, no, none, you're not really supposed to but there's nothing to stop you, no, and yes.

You just collect PD programs by whatever means, put an ad in the press, charge people a copying fee, and away you go. But be warned, there are millions of small PD places now, to get customers you have to advertise, and don't treat it as anything but at best a self-financing hobby.



Good old CPC: much better than an ST or Amiga, says A Happy CPC User

SNIPPETS...

...Where did you get the paper for *Shopping Express* from? It looks like it should be cut into squares and hung up in ■ smalles room[illegible] must admit I have found it useful however.
Mike Dansmith, London

...Your new Shopping Express section is very welcome and makes *Express* even better value.
Gerald Harpham, Carlisle

...Some of the readers' ads in *Shopping Express* are incomprehensible. Do you actually check them or just put them all in regardless?
Ed Tolson, Bristol

...We [illegible] to weed out the really silly ones, but I rather like the jokes and asides and people wanting to swop bacon sandwich for an Amiga [and in deference to the many Amiga owners] I won't say and vice versa.

PIRACY: AUDIOGENIC HITS BACK

I'd like ■ take up two points made by correspondents in Express 45. The pro-piracy case was put by 'Rolf Harris' (why do you publish letters from people who are not prepared to give their real names and addresses?). He attempts to justify piracy by saying that 99% of the software he gets is so bad that he doesn't keep it even when its 'free'.

For a start, the amount of money that publishers are prepared to invest in producing software is closely related to the expected returns - this is the way that any well run business has ■ operate. Piracy inevitably reduces the level of income, so publishers can afford to invest less. Less investment means (other things being equal) a worse product. Its a fact of life.

If 'Rolf Harris' thinks that 99% of the software is rubbish - well, what has he ever written? Anyway, by definition, half of it must be better than average! Software improves gradually over the years as programmers learn more and more about the hardware they are working with - it took five years for programmers to really stretch the C64 and Spectrum, and my guess ■ that it will take even longer ■ fulfil the potential of the Atari ST and Amiga.

■ users rely on magazine reviews rather than publishers' hype when deciding which products to buy there's no way they can be dissatisfied with the general quality of the software they purchase - unless they have unreasonably high expectations.

Another, from P Bocij, suggests that people who run computer clubs cannot be expected to take responsibility for the piratical activities of members - on the grounds that they could always go from Club A to Club B. That's a bit like saying that a landlord should turn a blind eye to underage drinking or drug trafficking ■ his pub because they would otherwise do it ■ the pub down the road.

All people involved in any position of responsibility within the microcomputer industry are responsible for upholding the ethics of the industry. A concerted effort is necessary, which is why industry organisations such as FAST, the BMF, and ELSPA are working together to stamp out piracy wherever it exists. Fortunately piracy ■ not ■ big problem in the UK, as it is in some other countries, but that doesn't mean it can be ignored.

■ is of paramount importance that people realise that piracy is not illegal, but downright dishonest, as dishonest as travelling on a train without paying your fare, or shoplifting. Until pirates and those who condone piracy accept that it ■ something to be ashamed of we have little chance of solving the problem.
Peter Calver, Audiogenic

• Thanks for your views. I'm dubious about your conclusion though; pirates know what they're doing is illegal, but they can get away with it, and the only thing that will deter them is the thought of getting caught. 'Awareness campaigns' should focus on real examples of people prosecuted for software piracy. (Recently in Italy some Lotus 1-2-3 pirates were prosecuted and the case received heavy press coverage. Sales of the program doubled immediately afterwards).

It'll be interesting to see if you're right about programmers stretching the ST and Amiga; I hope you are, and I look forward to playing on our office machines in the 90s.

GETTING IT IN THE NEC

Though I know I am in a minority of probably a few hundred at most, I must say that I find it very hurtful the way NEC has gone about its advertising campaign of informing purchasers of, modified grey import, PC Engines that they are on their own if something goes wrong.

What reasons could NEC have for not exploiting the UK markets. Could it be that after the MSX experience, many large Japanese combines suffered, discouraged NEC from exploiting the UK market; which admittedly though a lot smaller than either the Japanese of American markets, could build up quite ■ sizable following due to the Engine, being one of the first realisations of a cheap and powerful portable entertainment system.

Another interesting aspect to consider is the fact that Sega have allowed NEC to licence their coin-op games; ■ this due to a restrictive agreement where NEC will not sell the Engine in the Uk for a certain period? Who knows.

The recent cartridge piracy scandal must be enough proof that if NEC won't supply the demand, someone else will. NEC are missing a great opportunity to murder the current 8-bit Nintendo and Sega consoles in the UK, both of which the Engine outguns.

While one can understand why NEC have taken this stance, one must point out that they seem to have forgotten one very important fact: that if they had supplied Engines officially in the UK in the first place, there wouldn't have been a need to grey import them and NEC would not have needed to conduct their expensive advertising campaign.
Yan Fa Li, Bucks

• If the rumblings from Brentwood are correct, and Amstrad are indeed to launch a games console sometime next year based on the CPC, then whatever NEC decide to do in the next few months won't make much difference; an Amstrad console would surely wipe the floor with everybody.

SOUND ADVICE

If you've a musical bent your computer can help out. Stuart Anderton surveys the synthesised staves

The remorseless logic of a computer does not at first sight lend itself to an artistic pursuit such as music. But a micro can be used ■ many ways as an aid to the musician, or even as an instrument in its own right.

Depending on how much you care to spend you can make bleeping noises, make your machine sing, write your symphony or program a synthesiser to play perfectly.

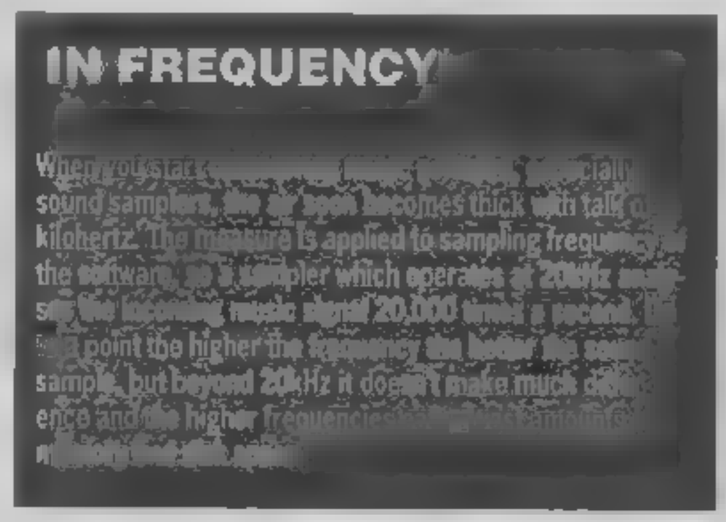
Feel the noise

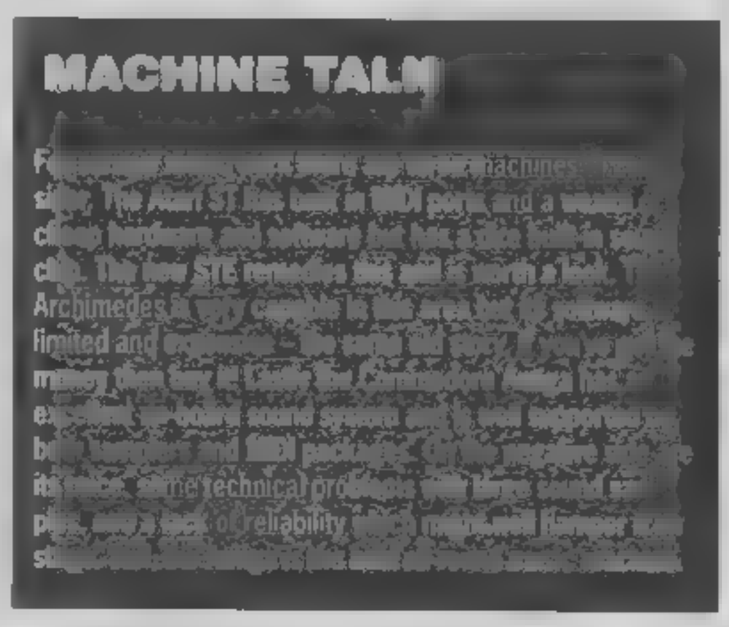
Most machines can make some kind of noise from their internal loudspeakers, but 'noise' is an appropriate term for the majority of their warblings. Owners of PCWs and PC-compatibles are particularly badly off in this area with a pathetic bleep being all they can raise. A PC copy of the Indiana Jones adventure game arrived in the office this week and its attempt to play Indy's theme tune was gallant, but unconvincing.

However most eight-bit machines and the Atari ST (which must be classed with them when ■ comes to its internal sound) can be programmed to play simple tunes either with special music software or from your own BASIC listings. You can control the pitch of the sound, its volume and duration. Finer control ■ by the use of 'envelopes' which shape the sound's volume, determining the attack, sustain and decay of ■ note. By using envelopes passable imitations of drums (rapid attack and decay) or a piano (rapid attack, long sustain and slow decay) are possible.

Some machines are capable of playing more than one note at once – the ST for instance has three 'voices' which can play simultaneously. If you listen to the average ST game's soundtrack you will here the melody (if that's the word) backed by drums and a bass line, the three voices.

The kings of sound however are the Amiga and the Archimedes. These machines offer multi-





channel stereo sound and can play really quite passable tunes through the monitor's loudspeaker or headphones.

Sing something sample

The micro's internal sound system can only play simple notes, but many machines, especially the 16-bit micros, can play sampled sounds. Sampling, as any rap connoisseur will tell you, ■ the electronic recording of sounds. The recorded sounds are stored digitally, like the music on a compact disk, and can be replayed through the micro's loudspeaker. Samplers allow you a lot of control over the played sound. With the appropriate software you can reverse sounds, change the pitch, edit the noises, join sounds together and generally play till your heart's content.

To sample sounds you need two things, a sampling device and the appropriate software, often packaged and sold together.

The sampling device is a hardware cartridge which holds an analogue to digital converter which takes the output from a tape recorder or microphone and produces a digital version of it which the computer can understand. The software then processes the digitised sound.

The machines to use for sound sampling are the ST (cheap but not brilliant quality) the Archimedes (excellent but the choice ■ limited) and the Amiga (the best all round).

Stick to the script

Another area where your machine can help you out musically ■ with getting your symphonies onto paper. Just about every machine offers manuscripting software, often in the ridiculously cheap public domain. Using ■ simple dot-matrix printer you can produce perfectly usable musical scores, the software being as simple to use as a wordprocessor. Even the most profoundly unmusical machines like the PCW can produce spot-on manuscripts.

In the MIDI

The most powerful, and therefore the most expensive, way of using your computer to make music ■ to let it control a real synthesiser. To that you need an interface to link your machine to the synth, and fortunately there is a standard for this known as MIDI.

If you fit a MIDI interface you can control your synth from the computer's keyboard and use programs called sequencers to play the tunes. This has several advantages over conventional playing. Firstly you can edit the score until it is perfect on the screen and then hit play for a perfect rendition of your composition. Most programs will let you play the synth's keyboard and will record the tune onto the computer's disk drive. Some will even automatically convert your two-fingered doodlings into a fully annotated musical manuscript.

You can also use the computer to save the synth's settings to disk, speeding your initial set up. Of course MIDI instruments are not limited to keyboards; guitars and saxophones are also available at a very reasonable price. Although these do not offer great sound quality you guitar players can record onto the micro and then replay through a decent synthesiser. MIDI offers a huge potential for musicians and most professional studios use it to aid recording.

■ you want to play with MIDI you'll need a MIDI interface for the computer and here the Atari ST takes the centre stage as it has one fitted as standard. The recently launched SAM Coupé also has a built-in interface but as yet there is no software to take advantage of it. The Amiga and Archimedes are very competent MIDI controllers when you have invested in the extra kit, but the well-heeled musician wouldn't be seen without a bank-destroying Apple Macintosh.●

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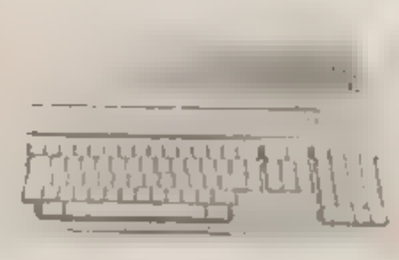

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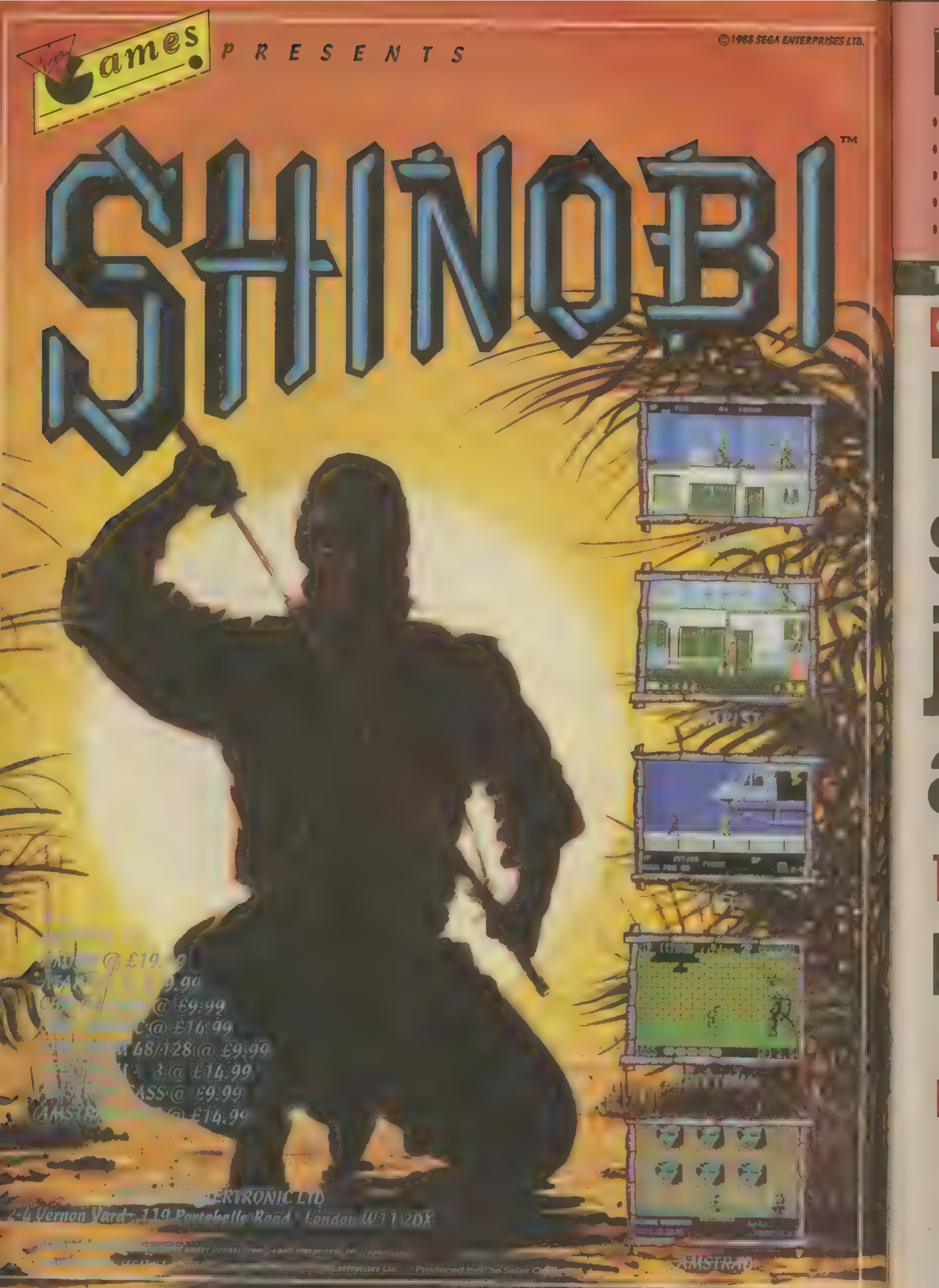

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No computer is complete, there are always peripherals to add to make it just that bit more useable. Joysticks and mice offer control over the micro, scanners allow you to grab images for your documents and monitors let you see what's happening more clearly. For the best buys, read on...

JOYSTICKS

Joysticks, mice and trackerballs are the most common peripherals to be connected to any computer, and now come in all shapes and sizes. The vast majority of joysticks can be connected to any machine and are divided into two categories: hand-held and traditional arcade style. Increasingly the hand-held type are taking over as the most popular sticks.

● KONIX NAVIGATOR

FROM Konix: 0495 350101
PRICE: £14.99

A hand-held joystick that has become one of the market leaders recently. It's been well designed to fit snugly in your hand and has a standard auto-fire feature. The design is such that it can be used by both left and right handed owners without difficulty.

▲ Excellent design
▲ Single fire button located on the handle
▲ Auto-fire
▲ Comfortable...

▼ But not to everyone

● COMPETITION PRO 5000

FROM Dynamics: 061 4290981
PRICE £15.95

A standard arcade stick with a difference – it's been designed in clear plastic so that all the inner workings can be seen. Very sturdy design which stands a lot of hammering.

▲ Trendy clear-plastic design
▲ Two fire buttons located on the base
▲ Robust

▼ Can't be mounted on desktop

● POWERPLAY CRUISER

FROM Powerplay: 0457 876601
PRICE £12.99

Great streamline shape with very sturdy design. Powerplay claims to have the lowest return rate of all the joystick manufacturers. A clever ring on the base of the stick makes it possible to vary the flexibility of the grip.

▲ Suckers let you bolt it onto desk
▲ Two fire buttons
▲ Unusual design and colour scheme
▲ Sensitivity control

▼ Unwieldy

● TAC 50

FROM Suncom: 0666 504326
PRICE £13.99

Standard arcade-style stick. Includes microswitches that make a loud click when movement occurs. Grey colour scheme. Too flimsy for many games.

▲ Includes microswiches

▼ Noisy
▼ Stick wobbles around too much
▼ Looks very unadventurous

● MICROLEISURE STARCRUISER

FROM Microleisure:
PRICE £18.95

Lots of extra features including a switch to change the direction of control – pushing forwards can be interpreted as pushing backwards.

▲ Two fire buttons
▲ Lots of features

▼ Bulky and unattractive design
▼ Expensive

● QS-113 DELUXE

FOR PC compatibles only
FROM Datel: 0782 744707
PRICE £29.99

Features allow this stick to be set in either auto-centering or free-floating mode. X and Y axis can be trimmed using added switches. An expansion card is included for connection to IBM PC-XT/AT. Two 15-way D-type game ports and an on-line 3-position selectable clock speed are included.

▲ Suction pads
▲ Auto-fire
▲ Reasonably cheap for a PC stick

▼ Clumsy design

MICE

Mice are more machine-specific with each mouse being designed to be connected to a specific machine. Trackerballs are like upturned mice; instead of rolling the ball over a flat surface, it's ball is rolled by hand.

● SERIES 9 MOUSE

FOR: PC compatibles
FROM Logitech: 0925 413501
PRICE £91

This smooth-looking ergonomically designed mouse is one of the most popular of Logitech's design. They are claiming that some 3.5 million units have been sold worldwide. Software comes bundled.

▲ Fits easily into the hand
▲ Very good control
▲ Good looker

● MICROSOFT MOUSE

FOR PC compatibles
FROM Microsoft: 0734 500741

Microsoft aren't exactly best known for their mice, but this one is another mega seller. It's been well designed to fit comfortably in the hand and glides across surface tops.

▲ Robust
▲ Functional
▲ Good bundled software

▼ Archaic design

● TURBO MOUSE 2

FOR PC compatibles
FROM NTS

Instead of a roller-ball this mouse uses photo-electric cells to detect movement. Unfortunately this means that it can only be used on a special mouse mat and, due to the felt-pads underneath, it runs stiffly across this.

▲ Looks very high-tech

▼ Awkward to hold
▼ Mouse buttons are badly positioned

● PC MOUSE II

FOR PC Compatibles
FROM Mouse Systems Corporation: 0256 461744

This brand-new design is claimed to be Mouse Systems' most advanced yet. It's another photo-electric cell design which has the advantage that there are no moving parts to get dirty or wear out. Dynamic acceleration gives it tight cursor control. Comes with its own mouse pad.

▲ User determined resolution from 20 to 6400 CPI
▲ Fits well into the hand
▲ Stylish

● REPLACEMENT MOUSE

FOR PC and Amiga
FROM Datel: 0782 744707
PRICE: £29.99

This standard rubber coated-ball mouse is intended to replace Amiga or 1512/1640 PC mice. It sits on Teflon guides for very smooth movement and has an optical system counting of 500mm.

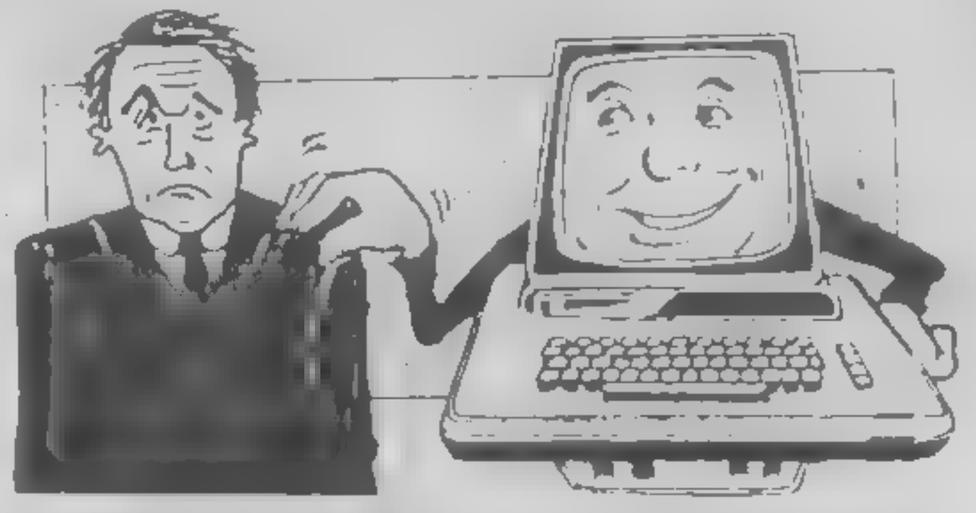
▲ Cheap

▼ Very poor design
▼ Difficult to use mouse buttons

● KEMPSTON MOUSE

FOR ST
FROM Kempston Data: 0234 841224
PRICE: £29.99

There aren't many replacement mice for the ST, but this is one of the best. Small and compact, it fits easily into the hand and can be used on a very small area. There is a noticeable difference from the



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standard ST mouse.

▲ Good design
▲ Only small work area required
▲ Long-lead

▼ Cheap looking

● TRACKERBALL

FOR ST
FROM Third Coast: 0257 424442
PRICE £24.99

The Trackerball ■ brilliant for playing *Marble Madness* but it's not really a lot of use for much else. The unit is big and cumbersome but you don't need the sort of space which a mouse requires so things aren't all bad.

▲ Good control
▲ Sturdy design
▲ Reasonably cheap

▼ Few games play well with it

SCANNERS

With a scanners you can grab ■ image from a page and import it as a graphic file into your computer. Three different types exist: hand-held, flatbed and printer scanners. The hand-held scanner is the most popular and is dragged by hand over an image. The problem with these is that only a narrow width can be scanned. Printer scanners fit onto the head of a printer and scan an image by forcing the print head back and forth across the picture. The quality isn't particularly good, but then they're usually cheap. Flat-bed scanners are the most reliable and most expensive. The image is scanned by passing a scanning head over the flat picture.

● PROSCANLAB

FOR Amiga 2000
FROM ASDG: 0923 818079
PRICE £3900

This is currently the only colour scanner available for the Amiga and ■ a highly professional flat-bed design. Variable resolution from 30 ■ 300 DPI is possible. Scanning can be in one, three, eight or 24-bit mode with real-time scrolling over large images. Colour correction is possible with independent control over red, green and blue levels. Edges can be emphasised or smoothed. The four-colour separations possible are some of the best seen on a home micro.

▲ Only system to offer colour system on the Amiga
▲ Postscript compatible
▲ Software reads and writes images in any Amiga format
▲ Variable scan resolution

▼ Very expensive

● GENISCAN GS4500

FOR Amiga and ST
FROM Datel: 0782 744707
PRICE £189.99

A hand scanner with 105mm width and 400dpi resolution. Adjustable switches let you alter the brightness and contrast of a scanned image to obtain the best results. Good software, which offers features to cut and paste selected areas of the image, is included in the price.

▲ Good results
▲ Software saves images in a variety of formats
▲ 400dpi

▼ Clumsy design

● DAATASCAN

FOR ST
FROM Kempston Data: 0908 677886
PRICE £150

Another hand scanner with a 105mm scan strip. Kempston has just released new software to accompany the scanner. Besides the usual cut and paste features, there are options allowing you to scan over the top of other images. 200 dpi resolution is limiting even though four grey-scale options are available.

▲ Easy ■ use
▲ Cheap

▼ Only 200 dpi
▼ Roller can slip giving uneven images

● CAMERON HANDY SCANNER

FOR ST & Amiga
FROM Cameron: 01-449 9192
PRICE From £199.89

The compact design ■ ideal, but sadly only 64mm strips can be scanned. Three types of grey scale are possible. OCR software is bundled with the machine. This interprets text scanned into memory and translates it into ASCII characters. Cameron offers a range of scanners in several sizes including an A4 flatbed scanner.

▲ Good quality output
▲ Small width
▲ 200 and 300dpi resolutions

▼ 64mm scan width
▼ Hard to install

● HS3000

FOR PC compatibles
FROM Ajwad: 01-788 1982
PRICE £215

The HS300 is much cheaper than other PC hand-held scanners and comes with the excellent Halo DPE editor. The software works in resolutions up to 300dpi, although the scanner can simulate 400dpi.

▲ Cheap
▲ Good bundled software
▲ Pseudo 400dpi mode

▼ Feels tacky

● HANDY SCANNER 4

FOR PC compatibles
FROM Cameron: 01-449 9192
PRICE £290

A sturdy hand-held model which fits neatly into the palm of the hand. Some very useful optical character recognition software (OCR) is bundled. The scan head isn't very large, but the software enable you to scan a large image in strips and join the bits together.

▲ Proper 400dpi scanning
▲ Good software
▲ OCR utilities bundled
▲ Comfortable to use

▼ Small scan head

● SCANMAN

FOR PC compatibles
FROM Logi UK: 0925 413501
PRICE £229

The ScanMan hand-held looks good and is

WINCHESTER UPGRADE KITS*

(complete with cables, fixing screws and installation guides)

Seagate

3½"

ST125	20MB 40mS MFM	**170.00**
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Western Digital	20MB 65mS	**165.00**
Western Digital	30MB 65mS	**175.00**

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MONITORS & ADAPTORS

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CD2000 EGA 14"	**210.00**
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CD VGA Card 256K RAM upgradable	**145.00**
CD Mono Graphics Card	**32.00**

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3½"

720KB **60.00**

Specifically designed for the Amstrad PC1512 and 1640 Range. Comes complete with all brackets, screws and comprehensive fitting instructions.

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9 Pin, 80 column, 130 CPS draft, 26 CPS NLQ, Paper Park, Push Tractor, 8K Buffer, Epson/IBM compatible + cable.

MT222 **380.00**

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CITIZEN

120D **95.00**

120 CPS draft, 26 CPS NLQ, 4K buffer, Pull Tractor, 2 year warranty.

CD FAX MATE

Single Telephone line switching unit that recognises both fax and telephone signals and automatically switches to the correct unit.

59.50

Genius

GM6 + Mouse PC/XT 800 DPI	**28.00**
GM6000 Mouse PC/XT or AT 1050 DPI	**35.00**

Both include menu maker, DR Halo IM + Library Software + Mouse Pocket and Mat

COMPONENTS

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Speed	170 cps draft elite 57 cps LQ Elite
Slewrate	21 Lines per second (3.4" PS)
LQ Matrix	24 x 35
Graphics Resolution	360 DPI
Printing	Bi-directional logic (short line) seeking
Number of Pins:	24
Interface	Parallel IBM Proprinter X24 Pro II Proprinter Epson LQ800 LQ1500
Buffer	7K
Dimensions	410mm (w) 328mm (d) by 120mm (h)
CHARACTER SET	ASCII International Italic and IBM in both draft and LQ 1 x draft font 8 x LQ fonts Courier Courier Italic Prestige, Prestige Italic. Orator Orator Italic. Script. Script Italic 3 x print variations Outline Shadowed Outline Shadowed outline 50 downloadable characters (expandable to 221 with 32K RAM

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reasonably priced. The 400dpi scanning mode offered is simulated and the software can scan images directly into Microsoft *Windows* or its own *ScanPaint* utility.

▲ Reasonably cheap
▲ Nice looking number
▲ Scanning can take place in Windows

▼ Not true 400dpi scanning

● MSF300Q

FOR PC compatibles
FROM Aptec: 01-627 1000
PRICE £1552

Aptec's flatbed scanner, manufactured by Microteck, can support up to 64 grey levels and includes graphics software for halftone and line-art applications. Expensive but then the 300dpi scans are quite something.

▲ Excellent 300dpi scans
▲ ▩ grey-level scans
▲ Good software

▼ Expensive...
▼ And doesn't offer 400dpi scanning

● SP-MH216AF

FOR ▩ compatibles
FROM Mitsubishi: 07072 76100
PRICE £689

Mitsubishi's offering is an interesting mix of the benefits (?) of hand-held and flatbed scanners. A sheet of paper (up to A4 in size) is fed through automatically, but must be guided by hand. It's not as good as a true flatbed – but for almost half the price you can't really complain.

▲ Cheap alternative ▩ flatbed
▲ Takes A4 sheets

▼ Only 200dpi resolution
▼ Not ideal method of scanning

● FX-RS505

FOR PC compatibles
FROM Panasonic: 0753 73181
PRICE £1374

Scanning ▩ up to 400dpi is possible in 16 shades ▩ grey. Its top resolution will become more useful as 400dpi laser printers appear. Panasonic's own scanning software, *Panscan*, ▩ supplied.

▲ Good 400dpi scans
▲ Cheaper than 300dpi scanners
▲ Solid design

▼ Only 16 grey scales available at higher resolutions

MONITORS

There are many monitors to choose from – most offer the same thing in a different box. The majority of monitors tend to work with PCs only, however, there are various others that are suitable for connection to Spectrums, C64s, STs, Amigas and all the other home machines. There are monitors for specialist applications: large paper-white monitors for DTP, high resolution colour monitors for graphic work, compact LCD screens for portability. One of the major problems with hooking up monitors is finding the right leads. Lightwave Leisure on 051 6305003 specialises in producing leads for connecting monitors to almost any type of machine.

● PRO 8CM852

FOR Amiga, C64, Spectrum, ST
FROM Philips: 01-689 2166
Price £299

A single scan-rate monitor similar to the Commodore 1084, but in a different case and with many of the esoteric functions moved from the front panel to the rear. The screen is etched rather than having the anti-glare coating of the 1084 – this gives reduced reflection from external light sources.

▲ SCART and composite input
▲ Excellent stable picture quality
▲ Good contrast and brightness controls

▼ Mono sound input and output

● QUADRAM MS1420 MULTISCAN

FOR All machines
FROM SDL : 01-309 1111
PRICE £399

A multisync monitor that can cope with PC CGA and EGA modes, ST mono and colour modes and virtually all other home computer graphics modes. It's big and comes with a swivel stand. Numerous dip-switches at the back of the monitor allow you to make colour selection and choose the type of video input.

▲ Professional looking
▲ Solidly built
▲ Good picture
▲ Works with numerous machines

▼ Documentation is poor

● KAGA TAXAN MULTIVISION PLUS

FOR All machines
FROM Taxan: 0344 484646
PRICE £746

The Kaga unit is a top of the range monitor with a price to match. It boasts an etched screen, 0.31mm dot pitch, digital and analogue input, and various contrast and brightness controls. It can cope with high resolutions, but lacks a horizontal hold control.

▲ Excellent picture quality
▲ Copes with numerous resolutions
▲ Analogue and digital input

▼ Expensive
▼ No horizontal hold

● ST64

FOR PC compatibles
FROM STL: 01-352 1478
PRICE £684

The ultimate in flat, thin screens. This monochrome LCD screen, which is compatible with EGA and CGA modes, is just 6.5cm deep. You are looking at the future. Lightweight and very compact.

▲ Thin
▲ CGA and EGA compatible

▼ Expensive
▼ Monochrome only
▼ VGA not supported

● COMMODORE 1084

FOR Amiga, C64, Spectrum, ▩
FROM Commodore: 0628 770088
PRICE £230

For such a comparatively cheap monitor it offers much: CVBS (composite), TLL and RGB input; stereo sound output; horizontal centring, brightness, contrast, colour, sharpness and volume controls ▩ front;

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- ★ FREE JOYSTICK AND FREE MOUSE MAT WORTH £4.95
- ★ All leads, manuals PLUS MOUSE and free mains plug!

REMEMBER! Many ST's do not come with BASIC - ours come with ST BASIC REV D by Metacomco.

520STFM Explorer Pack
£279.00

★ Explorer Pack Includes 520STFM 512K Keyboard with built-in 1 Megabyte Disk Drive and TV Modulator
★ 1 FREE Game, ST Tutorial and METACOMCO Basic worth £25.00
★ All Leads, Manuals PLUS MOUSE and FREE Mains Plug! ★ Free mouse mat worth £4.95

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£439.00

★ Includes 1 megabyte keyboard plus Hyperdraw, Hyperpaint, Organiser Business Software, First Basic, £50 Voucher toward 3 Atari Mind Games and Metacomco Basic

1040STFM Business Pack
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Business Pack Includes:

- ★ Atari 1040STFM Keyboard with 1 meg memory and 1 meg built- in disk drive plus TV modulator.
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- ★ All leads, manuals and mouse.

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Features:
- ★ Separate Keyboard and System Unit
- ★ All the Software Included with 1040 STFM Business Pack.
- ★ Blitter chip installed for faster graphics

Inc SM124 Mono Monitor..... £628.00

ACCESSORIES

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Competition Pro 5000 Joystick £13.95	Box of 10.....£13.95
Competition Pro with Autofire £14.95	Memorex Disk Box
Konix Speedking Joystick £11.95	For 40 3.5" Disks £8.95
Red Mouse Mat with Amiga logo ...£5.95	Amiga 1/2 Meg Expansion £119.95
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NOVICE unemployed STer needs programming languages anything useful but must be cheap. Will swap super pack software. Contact Mr A Campbell, 12 Town Street, Lound Nr Retford, Notts DN22 8RN.

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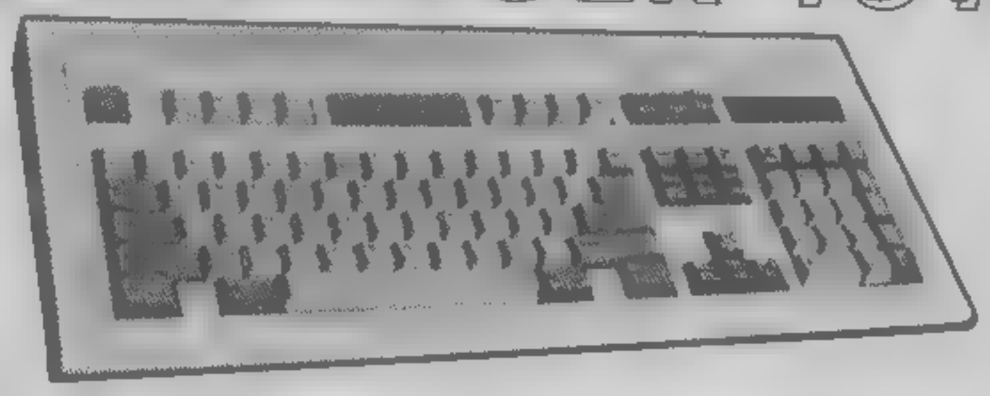

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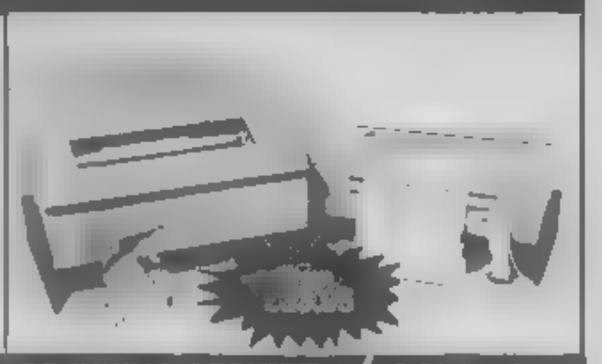

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CONTACT the Oracle for your ORIC computing needs. If you know your onions you will seek the sage at 8 Staley Hall Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3DT 061-303-7369

AMSTRAD CPC: Programming in BASIC and Assembly language; MS-DOS: '' really! Please state level of understanding: Sean McManus, 226 Chertsey Rise, Stevenage, herts. SG2 9JQ.

IF you want Z80, Basic or Program Design help, or just a chat about life, the universe and everything, write now! Alistair Mann, 714 Beresford Road, London, N5 2HR.

ST Desktop Accessories: don't try to Load Ratrap and SpeedMus. Accs together - they clash! Instead, replace SpeedMus with FMouse. Acc. Any PD or scanning help wanted? Contact John (01) 546 0993.

C64 contacts wanted, anyone with M/C problems or willing to swap ideas, tricks, routines, etc. answered, Tom, 736, Leeds Road, Shawcross, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF12 7QJ. Also wanted - demos.

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THE PC SHOW GUIDE

The PC Show is open to the public this weekend. It is the most important show of the year with exhibitors from every walk of computing life. To help you find your way around New Computer Express presents our guide to the stands and exhibitors. See you there

HOW TO GET THERE

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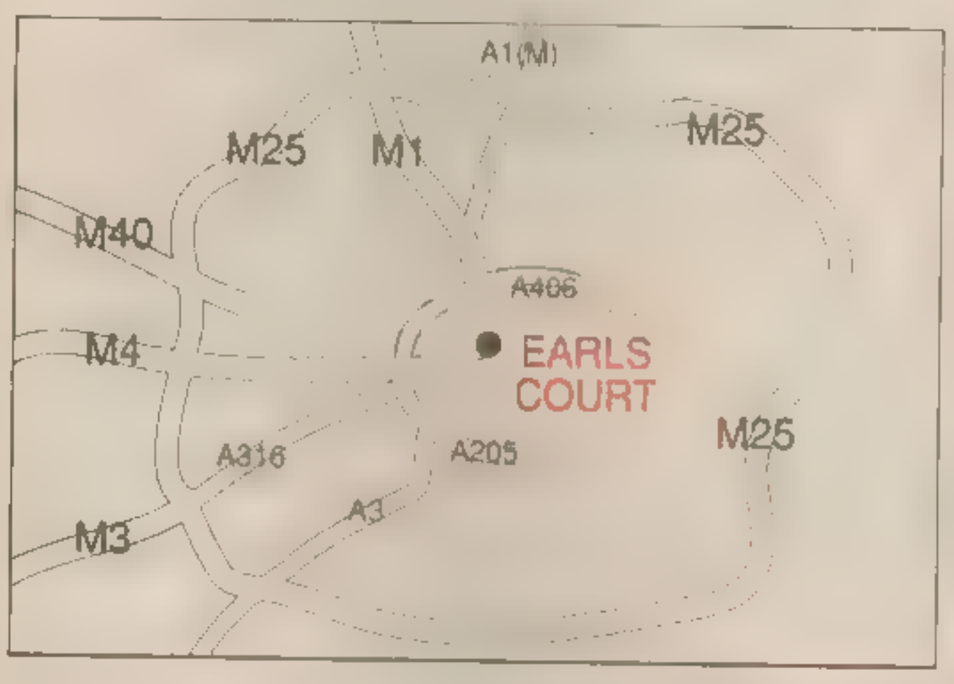

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From the **North**: come down via the M1 or A1 and turn right onto the A406 North Circular going west. After four miles take the A4, signposted Central London and West End. Earls Court and Car Parks are signposted from there.

From the **West**: get on to the A4 (via the M4 which continues as the A4, or the M40/M25/M4, or M3/A316). Earls Court is signposted. There's a very large car park in Seagrave Road, a few minutes' walk from the show.

By Rail

From most parts of the country, take the train to any British Rail London station, then take the underground to Earls Court.

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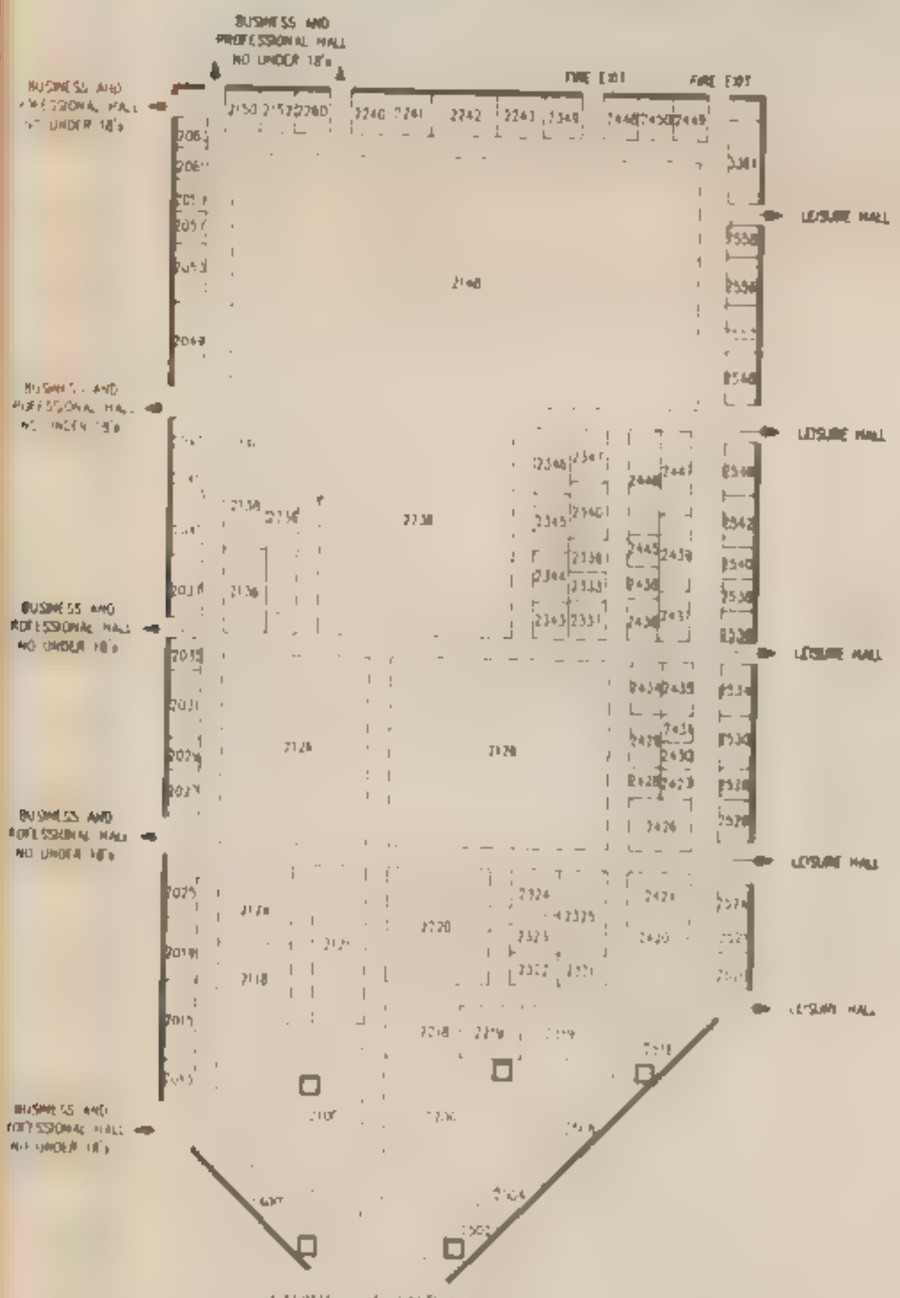

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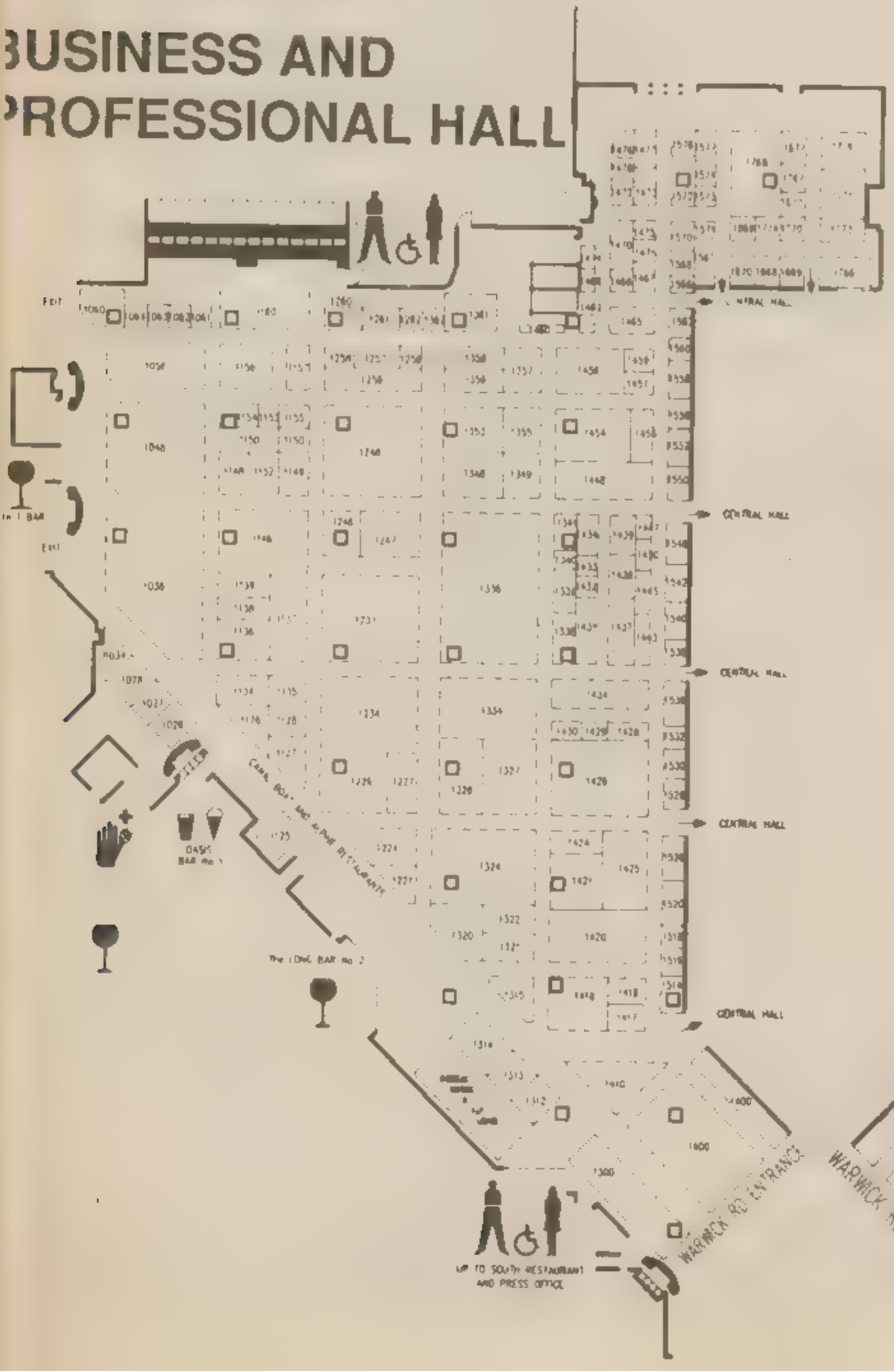

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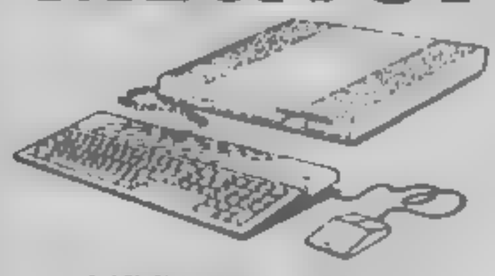

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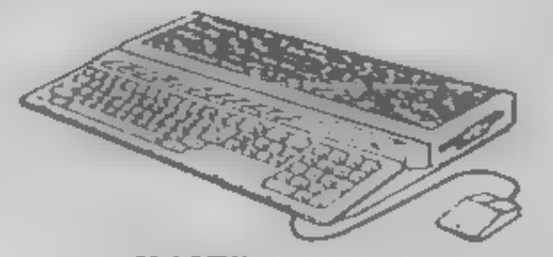

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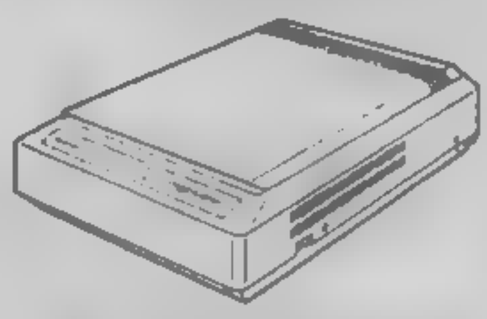

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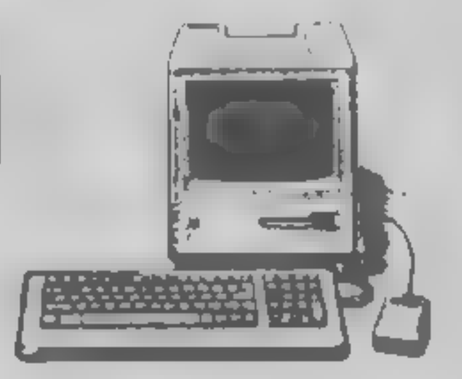

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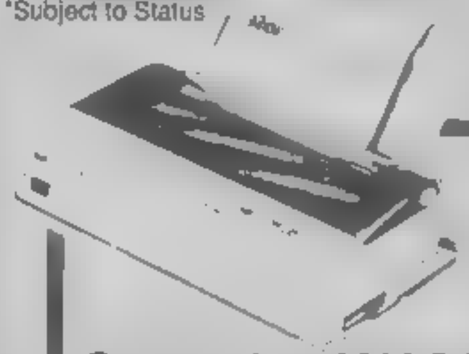

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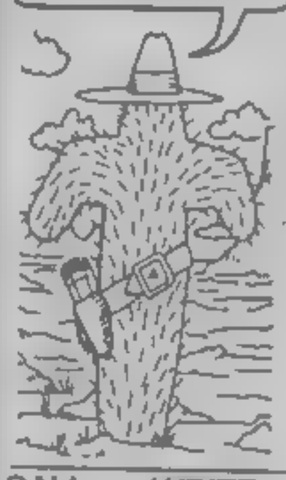

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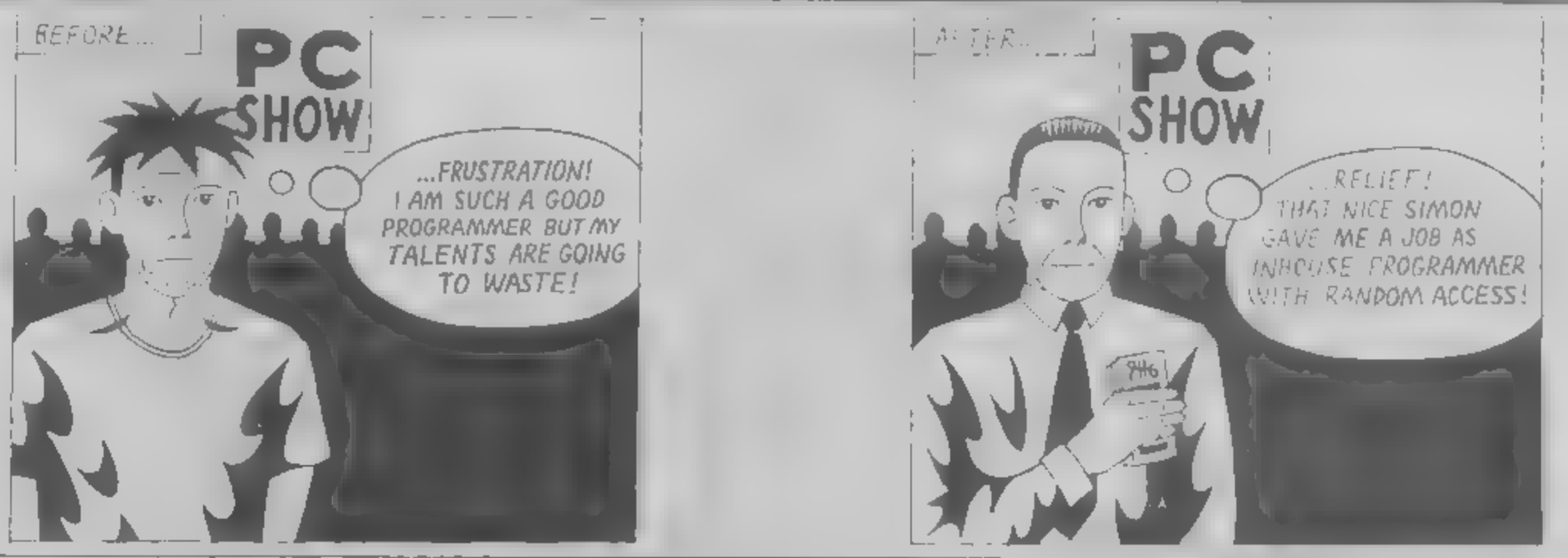

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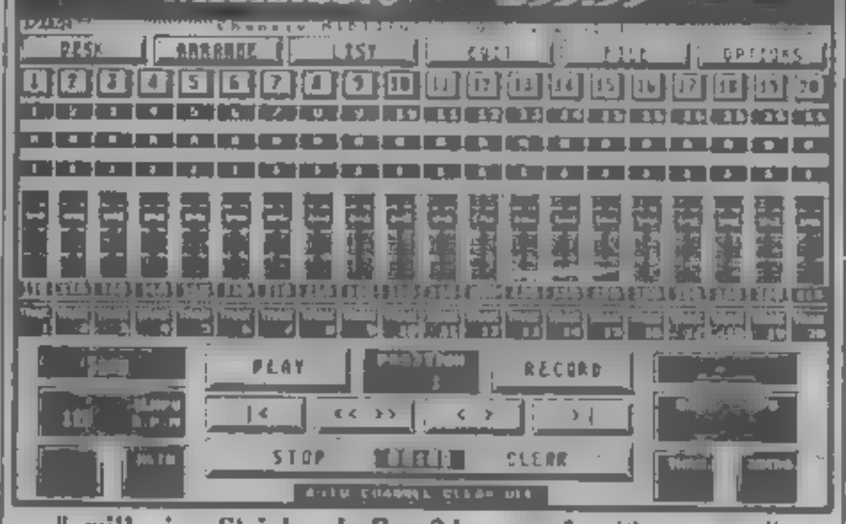

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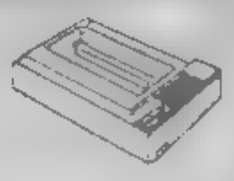

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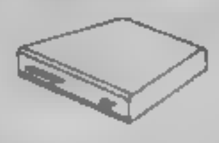

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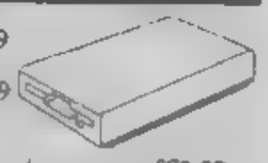

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SOUNDS GREAT

An add-in board for the PC offers stereo sound for games players. Quentin Mowbray puts on his headphones and switches on the Game Blaster

GAME BLASTER

PC • £119
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The PC and its compatibles are not exactly renound for their outstanding sound quality. The internal buzzer's bleeps ruin many games and music programs are out of the question.

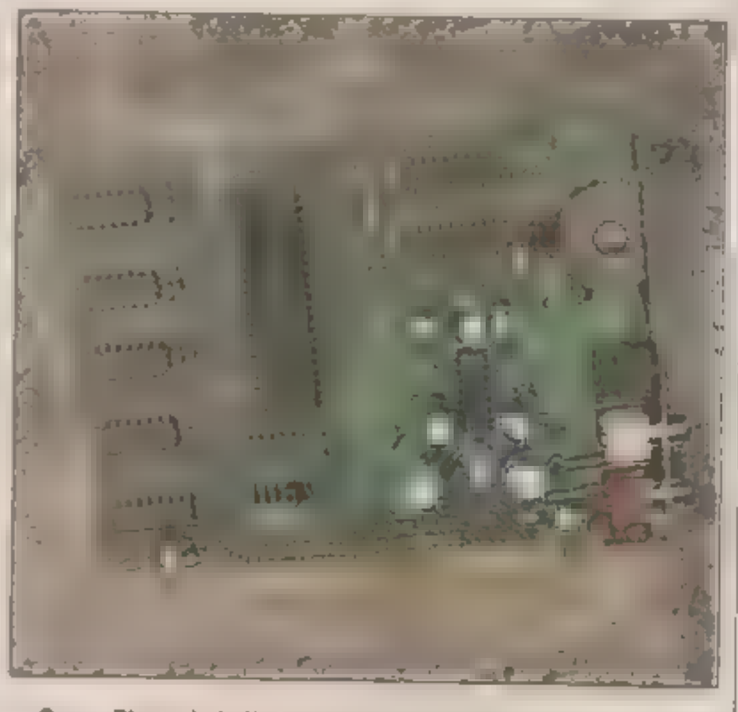
Now an add-on board called Game Blaster by Creative Labs Inc claims to turn your PC a stereo sound machine to rival the Amiga. With a full 12 channels of stereo excitement, the package comes with a half-size card and accompanying games drivers, and software to use the card as an electronic organ. The software is on both 5.25-inch disk and 3.5-inch; for once it's nice to see a software house taking 3.5-inch users into consideration.

The installation of the interface card is relatively simple provided you have the courage to take the lid off your machine and explore, as there are no diagrammatic instructions. Once this has been done, and you have put the machine back together, the installation of the software ■ simple for the DOS initiated. However, a separate piece of paper floating in the bottom of the box does indicate that you need to alter your CONFIG. SYS file to set FILES to 15 or more (which it probably already is). This kind of thing wouldn't be tolerated on most machines; there's no reason why an installation program couldn't do it automatically rather than leaving the user to struggle.

The installation program and manual lead you through the setting up of the i/o port, and providing that you have read the first few pages before hand, you will have no problems. Otherwise, if you haven't set up the jumpers on the music board before installing it into the slot, you will have to take the machine to pieces again to do so.

Listen in

Game Blaster gives you the option of using headphones or you can connect it up through your hi-



• Game Blaster's half-size card includes an amp with its own volume control

• Megablast: the Games Blaster comes with a free Sierra game and electronic organ software

■ speakers via the internal amplifier providing they are 4 ohms or above. Better still, jack it in to the amp of your system. Make sure the neighbours are away, though, mine didn't appreciate being transported into the speaker of ■ heavy metal rock concert at two o'clock in the morning!

The package comes with a Sierra game called the *Silpheed*, a Star Wars-style dogfighter adventure. A joystick is recommended, as the space bar is used as the fire button and continuous rapid fire ■ needed to get into the next round. The background music that accompanies your intergalactic adventure to save the battleship Gloire and the universe is quite entertaining, but Xacalite, the brutal interplanetary terrorist who has seized your newly built battleship Gloire, for some reason still talks via the internal speaker of your PC.

Drivers are included in the pack to run several other Sierra games with the board, including *Leisure Suit Larry II* and *King's Quest IV*. The device is compatible with the Creative Music Card so you can run such classics as *Sing-Along Christmas* which will play you Jingle Bells in 12-channel stereo. I kid you not, an order form is enclosed in the pack.

Get organised

The main screen of the free organ software displays a standard keyboard with F-key options at the bottom of the screen. These produce flip up menus to help you through. Learning to play is a combination of going through the manual and F-keys; you don't have to read music to play, as there is no music to read. Everything is done by ear. The F8 learn key is very helpful if you want to succeed with playing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star; or Baa Baa Black Sheep.

To get the benefit of this program, I suggest that you go through the basics of learning Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, as it does help you to understand which keys are which notes. If like me you just want to compose your own tunes and listen to them at a later date, the program will save your composition. Loading and replaying any saved compilation is just a simple F-key function. Who knows with a little practice you could even become the new Andrew Loyd Webber of the 90s.

It would have been nice to see your composed tune in a music sheet format on screen. Editing of wrong notes is next to impossible – if you make a mistake you have to recompose all of your efforts as an apprentice musician.

Verdict

The package asks you to imagine your favourite adventure game in full stereo. Unfortunately, at least at first, imagine is all you'll be able to do as the number of games which support the board is bound to be limited.

The Game Blaster makes a good noise, certainly in a different leaugue to the internal loudspeaker and easily as good as 'musical' micros like the Amiga or Archimedes. The increase in sound quality could lift games from passable (with the sound option off) to addictive.

The question has to be though, will it be supported by the games companies? Electronic Arts, Cinemareware and Activision are writing games for the device, but whether a significant number of games will be issued is another matter. At a hefty £120 it's unlikely to be bought in large numbers so large-scale software support seems unlikely. A pity.●

TECH TIPS

Personal computer problems? Express' Agony column has the answer. Write in strictest confidence to Uncle Techtip. The best tips win a freebie – so don't forget to tell us your address and machine

HELP! Printer perils

I am thinking about getting a printer for my Atari ST. I will probably get a Star LC10 or a Citizen LSP-100. I have read that both are Epson compatible. Does this mean that they will run on *Degas Elite* with the Epson printer driver and on *1st Word* with the Epson LX80 driver?

I have also read that the Star LC10 has four NLQ fonts. Does the Citizen have any fonts? Which the two printers would you recommend?
Kevin Gorey, Carshalton, Surrey.

Epson compatibility means that a given printer responds to the same set of control codes as an Epson. If you wanted to change typeface, do a reverse line feed or enter graphics mode then by issuing the relevant Epson control code command the printer performs the desired action. That's what happens in theory. In practise, many printers claiming Epson compatibility have lots - but not all - of the necessary codes so you may find that although the printer works perfectly well with your word processing software it may decide to misbehave when you use a graphics package.

Both of the printers you mention perform well and should work as an Epson device under all conditions, therefore your choice should hinge upon availability, price etc. Based upon those considerations I would choose the Star LC10. This printer is very popular at the moment, available everywhere, ribbons are cheap and you can get a very good discount deal from many suppliers.

The Star LC-10 - a lot of printer for a little money

HELP! Amstrad action

I have a Spectrum 48K, but have long been interested in Ataris and PC compatibles. I have now decided to save up for a computer, maybe an Amstrad 1512. My friend has an Amstrad 1512, are the graphics as good as those the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST? What can you get a 1512 for the shops? *(A couple of jam jars I should think - Uncle Techtip)* Is the Amstrad 1512 computer a good package that's really worth the money?
Neil Dalton, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire.

The Amstrad 1512 was the machine that broke the back of the PC market. Until the launch of the machine, PCs were strictly limited to the corporate business buyer, hardened computer freaks willing to sell their children into slavery to buy one, and members of the Getty family - in short, those with the necessary surplus of moolah.

Amstrad changed all that by putting an affordable PC compatible with reasonable specs (for the price and time) into the hands of the people. Right on! Nowadays, following Amstrad's example there are a million and one tiny companies manufacturing, importing and distributing PCs of every possible size, price and description, and some of them are excellent machines. Consequently, the Amstrad 1512 has had its day, it's severely limited in terms of expandability, you can't even upgrade to colour without extreme difficulty. Say a few words to the memory of the 1512 and leave it alone. One company with a particularly good deal on basic PCs at the moment is Dolan Electronics (0267 84538). This company is currently marketing a £399 10MHz XT with 640K RAM (the 1512 has 512K and it really does make all the difference), plenty of ports and expansion slots, a real time clock and the whole thing is easily upgradable to colour. You can add a 3.5 inch drive for £60.

Basic CGA-based PCs simply can't compete with the Amiga and ST in terms of sound and graphics, so don't expect to be wowed by amazing games and art packages.

Musician or techie guru?

HELP! Look of love

I have just purchased a Multiface for my Atari ST and although it is a relavtively simple task to back up software that loads in all in one go, could you explain to me how to back up games that load in a level a time e.g. *Op Wolf, R-Type, Dragon Ninja*.

Now that you are writing for *Express* does this mean that you are no longer singing for ABC?
Clive Eveans, Tynewydd, Mid-Glamorgan.

You're a very naughty nephew. Tell you how to copy multi-stage games indeed! And what's worse, making allusions to my so-called, supposed, self-styled resemblance to Martin Fry. Candidly, we just weren't getting the hits. Clive an' I gotta make a livin' baby...

TIP Uncle stupid!

Are you stupid or what? Your reply to Mark Harrison about upgrading his Amstrad CPC464 to a CPC6128 is partially wrong and possibly damaging (to Mr. Harrison's pocket) if does what you suggest and tries to remove the 40009 chip with a screwdriver, as on some of the later versions the chip is soldered onto the board and not plugged into an IC holder.

Another point, I did not know that Romantic Robot still sold the Multiface due to the puzzling maze of ins and outs of the Copyright Act, and am therefore wondering at what price is now retailing at.
Cameron Taylor, Bishopton, Renfrewshire.

Don't know very much then do you? (said best schoolboy threatening voice *à la* Grange Hill). After taking legal advice Romantic Robot decided to carry on selling the device.

Obviously if a chip is actually soldered to a motherboard then you don't attack it with a screwdriver. Do I have to spell out everything?

HELP! Monitor madness

I have been reading *New Computer Express* with interest for some while now and I feel that you can handle technical problems *(if only I felt the same way - Uncle TT)* so here is a good one for you.

I have a monitor that no one has been able to tell me anything about. I have an International Computers Limited monitor, machine type 7561/2, serial number 14959. On the back there are three interfaces a standard TV type marked I/F, and two seven pin DIN sockets marked I/F and KBD respectively. I think it is a Plessey brand monitor.

Would it be possible to use this monitor with either the Spectrum, SAM or Atari computers? If not, to what use can be put?
E. J. Pectit, Weymouth, Dorset.

The 'monitor' you have is a terminal (lacking a keyboard) for an ICL mainframe or mini computer. There's a lot of control circuitry contained within the case and unless you're prepared to perform a complete strip down removing all surplus components and ensuring electrical safety, I'm afraid there isn't a chance of using it with domestic computers. To what use can it be put? A play house for small pets, doorstop, attractive and unusual hat, weapon or you could hire a video camera, drive to a stretch of coastline with cliffs and video one of your friends hurling it into the abyss.

HELP! Tape upgrade

I have recently upgraded a Commodore Amiga from the C64 and I

am wondering ■ it is possible to get the C64 emulator ■ use the Amiga's disk drive to copy C64 games from tape to 3.5 inch disk?
Mark Wright, Bangor, County Down.

I should think it highly unlikely that you will be able to transfer commercial games using a copy protection breaker program running under a C64 emulator. Unless the Techtippers known differently (and they often do) I should stick to running commercial software on your C64.

HELP! Big foot

What is a computer's 'footprint'? And what is a paper-white monitor? Also can you recommend the best boo k for learning Amiga assembly language? I get fed up with books that assume I'm a complete computer illiterate because by the end I haven't learned anything I didn't know before.
Matt, Falmouth, Cornwall

The footprint of a computer is the amount of space occupied by the system box. For instance, imagine if you will a PC-type computer. There's a large box housing the drives etc., and a monitor sitting on top. The area of a desk or table top taken up by this system box is known as the footprint.

Monitors come in many guises. One of the most popular is the green-screen i.e. a dark background displaying green text and graphics (such as the Amstrad PCW screens). Unfortunately, this type of display can be a little heavy on the eyesight of those using it for long periods. As a solution, the idea of a paper white monitor was proposed. A paper white monitor displays black text on - as its name implies - a white background. This is very much easier on the eye and highly suitable for DTP, graphics and other arty applications.

An excellent introduction to Amiga machine language is *Amiga Machine Language* published by Abacus, available for £19.95 from H. B. Marketing on 0895 444433.

TIP CP/M emulator

I had a telephone call from Stephen Bromwich of High Wycombe, Bucks who wanted to assure me that the CP/M operating system ■ indeed available for the Amstrad PC200 (he also wanted to ensure that his forename had PH rather than a V - his friends didn't believe his last appearance on these hallowed pages). Apparently Shareware Marketing (0297 24088) are currently peddaling the pre-historic OS. Ask for disk 950. My thanks to Steve...

TIP Junk machine

Your blatant lies in *Express* issue 44 force me to put print head to paper regarding the PC200. Amstrad deserve all the criticism they get but you went too far when comparing the PC200 with the Atari ST. Parts of your reply were grossly misleading and openly displayed your bias towards 68000 machines *(my only bias is away from junk silicon - Uncle TT).*

The PC200 was launched to for people who had graduated through the various Sinclair ZX models and wanted a PC compatible that could be used for serious applications as well as for entertainment. For those who use PCs at their workplace and want a machine at home that is compatible the PC200 is a reasonable buy.

The basic machine ■ cheap, uses an 8086 chip running at 8MHz and contrary to what you said, can be easily expanded.

Had Uncle's criticism been limited to the sound capability of the PC200 then all well and good but to call it a dodo because it fails to fill the specification required is ridiculous. The PC200 can be expanded to suit your pocket. The computer shown in the photograph was bought as the basic PC200 with the mouse and was easily upgraded. with hardware added as and when it could be afforded.
David Besnard, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Why do I get the feeling that you're responding in a somewhat emotional way because you feel a personal slight rather than because you wish to enlighten the readers as to the specification of the PC200? Rather than expanding the machine to suit your pocket, wouldn't it be nicer to buy a machine costing the same as the PC200 yet with ■ of the bits and pieces that machine is lacking? £399 - the price of the mono monitor PC200 - will buy you the Dolan XT running ■ 10MHz with lots of ports, expansion slots and easy colour upgrade paths. Sorry, Dave but I stand by my original description. In fact the epithet 'dodo' when applied to the PC200 is letting it off lightly.

TIP Real pro

If anyone is struggling with the recording of system exclusive MIDI data, using Steinberg *Pro 24* software, this may be simply stored as a discrete pattern on the sequencer having set the relevant track to 'no MIDI change' and the MIDI definition's Systex record filter to off. The advantage of this technique is that system exclusive data may be stored within song files adding to the completeness of the data. Some experimentation may be required to ascertain optimum recording and playback tempos, as I have seen a module or synth which would not respond when a tempo of 40 was used.

Does anyone know of a cheat mode or similar for the Psygnosis release of *Baal*? The complexities of this game have frustrated me for some time, until I now feel that a cry for help is in order. By the way I'm playing the Atari ST version of the game.
A. Lepatourec, Crook, County Durham.

TIP Word processing

I've tried quite a number of Spectrum word processors and two of them, *Word Manager* and *The Writer*, got rave reviews in the computer press despite being totally useless for actually producing documents. It's hard to believe but they rivalled even *Mini Office* on the PCW in the contest for the greatest number of bugs ■ a single piece of software! One that did work was *The Last Word*. Almost unique among Spectrum programs, it would happily interface with BASIC so you could write your own routines for headers and footers etc., and it managed to pack features such as search and replace, isertion of files from disk, alarm clock and calculator into about 16K of code. The program is available from Saga Systems of Woking, Surrey.
John Hudson, Gatesheed, Tyne an' Wear man.

HELP! Write on

Since I'm contemplating buying one of the ST professional packs, ■ appreciate some comments on the merits or otherwise of Microsoft *Write*. I want to produce quite long documents and need German, Italian and French characters.

The bundle's attractive since I need the database. Trouble ■ *Express* recommends *Superbase* but say nothing about *Write* - would I be better advised to spend the extra and buy *1st Word Plus* or what?

I've been using IBM *Displaywrite 4* at work for two years so I don't exactly expect perfection/state-of-the-art.
Nick Beatle, Exeter.

1st Word Plus is a super word processor and *Superbase* an excellent database but Microsoft *Write* has one over-riding advantage: it's FREE! Buy the Professional Pack and enjoy Microsoft *Write*. It isn't the best word processor around but it isn't the worst either.

TIP CLI Tips

For those of you who nothing of the CLI and like can't afford a manual here are some tips. They are pretty straight forward, so no explanations, but they might help to put people on the right track.

Output to printer

`LIST TO PRT:`	1 drive system
`LIST DIR c TO PRT:`	1 drive system
`LIST "DF1:" TO PRT:`	2 drive system
`LIST "DF1:c" TO PRT:`	2 drive system

Output to screen

`DIR DF1:`	2 drive system
`DIR DF1:c`	" "
`LIST DF1:`	" "
`DIR` 1 drive system	
`DIR` ■	" "
`LIST`	" "

Output to speak

`COPY any-document TO SPEAK:OPT/m/s200`	1 drive system
`COPY "DF1:any-document" TP SPEAK:OPT/m/s200`	2 drive system
`LIST TO SPEAK:OPT/m/s200`	1 drive system
`LIST "DF1:" TO SPEAK:OPT/m/s200`	2 drive system

Can I also enquire as to whether there are any Amiga owners out there who are interested in the following subjects:

1. **Model rocketry**
2. **Robotics**
3. **BASIC programming (pertaining to the above)**
4. **Applications of any kind other than games and word processing**

I'd also like to know if there is any possible means of using an old 128L Spectrum as a printer buffer between the Amiga and my printer?
Dave Evans, LLandudno, Gwynedd.

Thanks for the tips. I'm afraid there isn't a hope of using the Spectrum as a printer buffer - it's better employed as a doorstop or drinks coaster You might even try to compute with it, but that would be a little adventurous....

AMIGA BLIT

SEUCK follow up

Palace's critically acclaimed game creation system, The *Shoot-'em-Up Construction Set* has been available for a couple of months now, and already Palace has unveiled plans to produce a follow up in the not too distant future.

According to Pete Stone of Palace, response to the Amiga version has been phenomenal with the company receiving literally stacks of suggestions and requests for possible enhancements to the system 'We've been swamped by letters from users suggesting enhancements, in fact we've received so many genuinely good ideas that *SEUCK* 2 is more than a distinct possibility', commented Pete.

Readysoft do it again

After the the success of ReadySoft's conversion of the laser disk arcade wonder, *Dragon's Lair*, the company is soon to release a follow up in the form of Don Bluth's Space Ace.

You control Dexter who's girlfriend, Kimberly, has been kidnapped by the evil Borf Unlike *Dragon's Lair*, *Space Ace* contains far superior gameplay as each section can be completed in a number of different ways, unlike *Lair* which could only be completed by figuring out the precise moves required for each screen - once you had done this, the completed screen no longer provided a challenge.

Exact release and pricing details are yet to be confirmed, but rest assured that you'll hear about it first in AmigaBLIT

AMOS update

Oooh! I'm so excited! Yes folks, *AMOS* makes it into AmigaBLIT again with even more mouth watering specification-type details to make the lives of all you suffering games programmers a little better

As reported in a recent AmigaBLIT Mandarin's soon-to-be-released *AMOS* is a complete BASIC-like games programming language that allows the user to produce stunning effects that were previously on possible through languages such as assembler

Mandarin plans to release AMOS in early January, but below is a rundown of the almost final specification for this impressive package to give you a taster of what to expect.

PROGRAM EDITOR - *AMOS*'s program editor is a powerful, yet totally configurable beast that includes lightening fast text rendering speeds For the macros freaks among you, the Amiga function keys can be defined to either single commands, or complete macros.

When a program is run from within the editor, *AMOS* examines the whole program, checking it for syntax errors before finally running it. Using this system allows for the rapid removal of errors therefore speeding up the program development process. When an error is encountered, *AMOS* allows you to correct it and the continue from where it left off.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND - According to Mandarin, *AMOS* offers the highest level of control over the Amiga this side of the assembler programming language.

For starters, *AMOS* allows you to simultaneously display upto 48 blitter-based software sprites Static sprites are all very nice, but with *AMOS* you can send any sprite flying across the screen using an animation string produced by drawing a movement path with the mouse pointer

AMOS can use up to eight different screens, each with its own separate resolution, bitmap, position and colour palette Frustrated AmigaBASIC programmers will also finally be able to take full advantage of Extra Half-Brite, HAM and fully overscanned display modes Once a screen has been defined, any part of it may be scrolled smoothly by just changing the X and Y offsets of the screen

For adding music to your gaming creations, *AMOS* allows tunes in either *Sonix* or *Sound Tracker* format to be played under interrupt while you program continues as per normal

ACCESSORIES - The *AMOS* system doesn't just consist of a fancy program editor and powerful BASIC, to make the development of games simpler, *AMOS* also includes a whole range of accessory programs At the top of the list is a professional sprite editor which allows the creation of animated sprites for direct inclusion into your *AMOS* programs

Also included with the *AMOS* package is a powerful, *Sonix*-compatible music editor and a Copper List editor which allows you to produce those nice, but rather over-used, copper colour bars that seem to be used within just about every Amiga demo these days

Testing? What's that?

Before becoming a journalist, I worked as an analyst programmer producing applications in several languages including C and COBOL within the Unix environment Within the corporate market, coding takes second place to the process of initial design and program testing Only a tiny fraction of the time spent on a programming project is actual spent programming! But very few bugs ever got through to the end user

Unfortunately, many (but not all!) Amiga programmers producing serious applications seem unaware of the concept of program testing This can not only damage the quality of the program, but the reputation of the Amiga as a viable alternative to the PCs and Macs of this world How many times have you used a piece of software that has locked up and then turned around and blamed the machine? Although the Amiga OS may have flaws, it isn't always to blame when the machine crashes!

Several major programs have been rushed out onto the market complete with bugs that have made the program almost unusable One notable example is the American version of *PageStream*, which the UK distributors, SDL, have had to rework the program to make it fit for release

Protext is innocent!

I've had a couple of worried letters from people asking about the 'bugs' in Amiga *Protext* that I hinted at three weeks ago Well, OK maybe 'highly bugged' is an exaggeration - I've only really come across one problem while using *Protext*, which locks up large text files (15-20k).

However, Arnor have not heard of this one, and no-one else has reported it, so it looks like *Protext* is innocent. Anyway, to anyone who's worried, I can put your minds at rest. I have been using, and will continue to use *Protext* to put my copy together for both AmigaBLIT and for my other job as technical editor on *Amiga Format* magazine (no plug intended!)

Jason Holborn

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ST

Hard drivin'

Third Coast is one of the most active companies serving the ST hardware scene at the moment and not content with bringing out *Hypercache* and all their RAM upgrades, it's now released a vast number of new internal hard drives for the mega range of STs

The are two different sets on offer The first of these consist of 22Mb, 32Mb and 50Mb capacity drives which have access times of 25ms and data transfer rates of around 600K per second These are selling for £349, £399 and £449 respectively The access time is the time it takes for the head to locate a file and compares to 40ms found most hard drive units

But by far the most interesting range is their set of 12ms systems These come with capacities of 45Mb, 85Mb and 105Mb and feature a 64K cache which works like a printer buffer in that data is spooled into the cache This method of caching data is extremely popular across the pond where US multi-user systems use it to overcome the input/output bottleneck. The fast access time beats anything else available on the ST and is brilliant if you're after the ultimate system. Third Coast are selling the drives for £599, £799 and £999 respectively

All the drives are 3.5-inch types which fit on top of the battery-backed clock A hole is cut into the back of the mega and a lead is threaded out to the DMA port. A second DMA port is provided to allow several hard drives to be daisy-chained together Since the clock must be removed, a new clock is supplied on the main board All systems will be fitted free of charge.

For those of you with big storage requirements, a 200Mb drive is on its way - Third Coast are yet to announce the price but £1500 seems likely

Third Coast can be contacted on 0257 426464

DASH it

Microdeal's latest addition to the disk utilities scene comes in the shape of *DASH* - a piece of software which will be of use to anyone who makes extensive use of floppy disks. The software consists of a disk formatter and copier In the light of recent copying laws, the copier will not reproduce protected disks but will instead produce a copy of standard formatted disks and replace corrupt blocks of data with blank ones. Thus, if a word processor file has been corrupted then the majority would be salvaged and the remainder removed so that the file could be loaded without encountering a read/write error This is of enormous benefit to anyone who has suffered at the hands of their disk drive.

The formatter is the most interesting side to this software Besides formatting to IBM and 10 sector formats, Microdeal claims that it can format a new disk in 10 seconds flat. A speed of four seconds can be achieved if the disk had previously been formatted and all that's required is for the contents to be removed. This works by simply formatting the first few tracks but it doesn't solve the problem of bad sectors further on in the disk

The specifications sound good but we'll have to wait to see if it lives up to them.

DASH will retail for £19.99 Microdeal can be contacted on 0726 68020

One for the SEUCKers

Palace are poised to release the ST version of *SEUCK* so last week I went to their head office to suss it out The software lets you create your own vertically scrolling shoot-'em-ups without understanding any programming languages A series of menus let you re-write any of the three games supplied with *SEUCK* or alternatively you can start from scratch

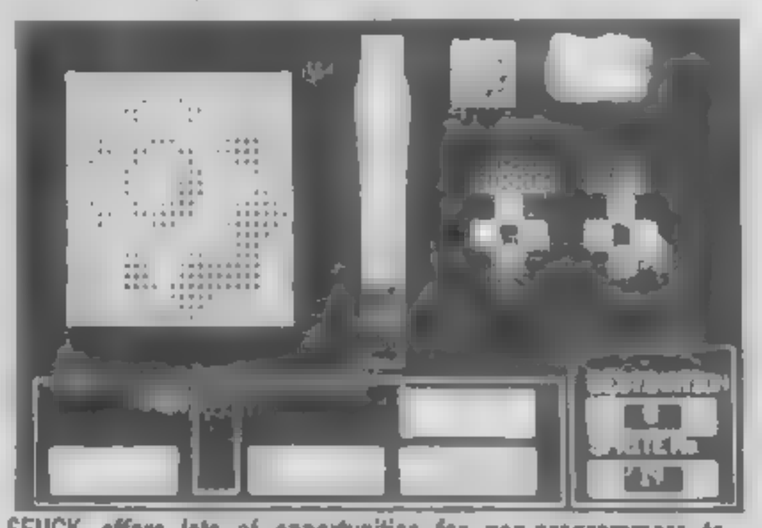
SEUCK is divided into three design elements which allow you to create backgrounds, draw your own sprites and define the paths which aliens will take. An edit screen displays a blow-up view of a 24 X 24 pixel grid and up to eight colours can be placed in the different locations This is used to define all sprites In the case of backgrounds, several may created and these are position to build up a patterned backdrop which can stretch upwards for as far as the shoot-'em-up will progress.

Alien sprites are defined in the same way as backgrounds except that an invisible colour becomes available so that the background will show through. Limited explosion effects can be achieved and a certain amount of animation can be used to show the same alien moving in four directions

Editing the path of offending enemies couldn't be simpler Using the joystick you can draw the route the enemy will take and this path is activated when the player reaches a certain part of the level

The main difference between this and the Amiga version, released earlier in the year, is the sound editor It's sophisticated enough to let you add spot effects and blasting routines. The editor makes creating sound effects so simple that Palace's sound supremo, Richard Joseph, is considering using it when he designs future spot effects in Palace games.

SEUCK will be on sale in two weeks time for £24.99



SEUCK offers lots of opportunities for non-programmers to create their and own shoot-'em-ups

Outrun news

US Gold intends to make a big announcement at the PC show regarding its intended Christmas number one this year but Club ST has already wormed details of the project out of the company. After US Gold's phenomenal sales success with *Outrun* two years ago, it's looking to follow it up with a conversion of *Turbo Outrun* this Christmas. The game will be converted from the popular racing car coin-op but after the let-down with the last *Outrun* conversion Gold's hoping to provide the kind of graphical effects and playability which accompanied the arcade game. This will hopefully ensure that both press and public love it.

Kim Harmagh

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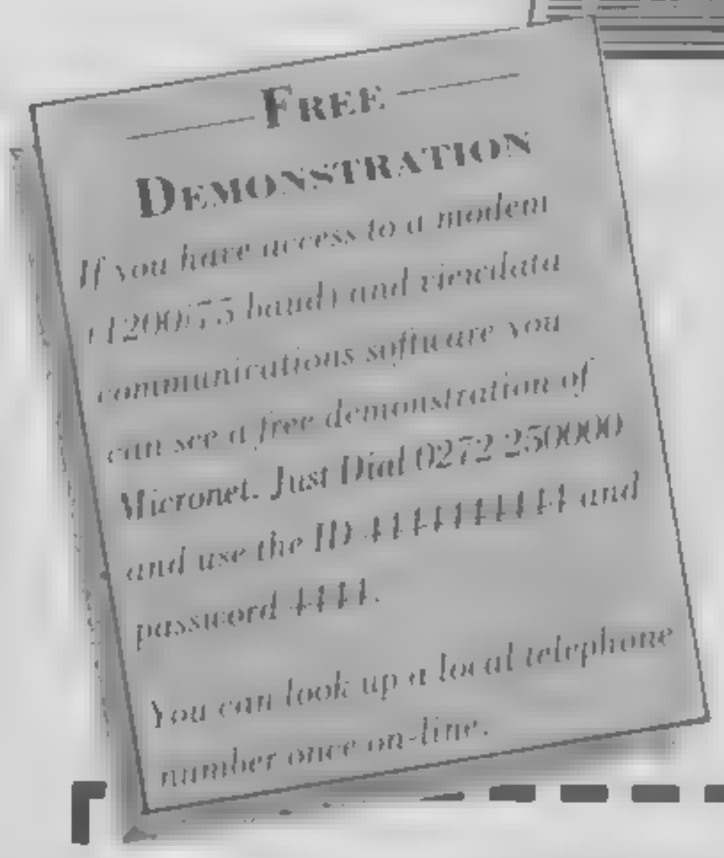

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NCE 11

MICRONET

Free modem offer available in the UK only to new members while stocks last. Minimum subscription period 1 year. Prices do not include software or cable.

SPEX

Holy Spectrums

As you read a few Spexes ago, despite much straining I couldn't get my hopes very high for *Batman* - The Game of the Movie, Comic, T-shirt, Bendy plastic toy etc.

This was one title that would sell warehouse loads as long as [redacted] had a few pictures of the man with pointy ears and tights on the cover and was in the shelves in time to catch the hype generated by the film, regardless how well the game itself actually played.

Hopefully you didn't take any notice of my ramblings because Ocean have released one of the best licenced software releases for the Speccy [redacted] far.

Like the latest Bond and Indy games the action takes place over five different levels, each one based on a key sequence from the film. Only this time it's easy [redacted] identify exactly which scene you're taking part [redacted] and there's also a good deal difference between each one.

Effectivly, you're getting four mini games for your tenner and judging by the first few (unfortunately time and lack of talent mean I've yet to get any further) Ocean could have released each one separately without fear of being dangled by their ankles off skyscrapers, incarcerated in Gotham City Jail or anything else the Dark Knight does to people who aren't honest and decent.

The graphics are some of the best I can remember, there's [redacted] brilliant soundtrack (unfortunately not Prince) even the box is nice.

In case you haven't guessed I think it's worth paying £9.99 for.

Coffee break

Paul Cook of Coventry has written to tell me that he's just bought a second hand and badly coffee scared +2 which works perfectly and loads the hundreds of games he has got with it.

"The only trouble" he writes "is that no joysticks were included and I'm a bit confused as to what ones I can use. The manual say's only use Sinclair SJS ones but no-one seems to sell these. Can you explain in words of only one syllable which will work and what I should get?"

I'm not sure if my intricate literary style will accommodate single syllables but you can ignore the manual in this case as practically every joystick will work with the +2 (and +3) as long as you connect them to your Speccy with a special adapter.

Whatever happens, do not just plug common and garden, plain vanilla sticks into your machine without the adapter. In their infinite wisdom, Amstrad fiddled around with the wiring of the ports and so inserting a standard 9 pin plug cuold resort [redacted] a pool of molten plastic where your joystick used to be.

A [redacted] of joystick manufacturers bundle these adapters with their sticks but if the controller you finally decide on doesn't include this vital item, you might still be able to get hold of one separately from your local computer shop.

As for recommeded models, its hard to select one from the huge multitude avaliable. It depends how much room you've got.

Of course, if you want [redacted] emulate the legendary games playing skills of your favourite columnist having the same type of joystick might help.

Personally I use the Konix Navigator which is a hand held model that looks suspiciously like the zap guns carried by somee dubiously costumed aliens in a recent episode of Lost in Space.

Despite this, it performs well and has been sturdy enough to survive a few falls from my sweaty grasp during frantic extra terrestrial slaughter sessions.

The price is around £14 from most software outlets.

Drool drool

As well as *Batman*, Ocean have lined up a very drool worthy compilation. [redacted] goes by the dramatic name of Dark Force and rather than keeping to the standard compilation formula of a really good game, lots of average ones and several absolute abominations it instead comprises four games of superlative standard.

The titles are *Last Ninja 2* (huge arcade adventure with loads of beat 'em up action), *Dark Side* (the second brilliant game in Incentives amazing Freescape series), *Batman - The Caped Crusader* (excellent two part arcade adventure presented like a comic) and *R-Type* (probably the best horizontallyscrolling shoot 'em up for the Speccy).

If it doesn't seem long since you listened to me rave about a few of those when they originally came out that's because it isn't. The package is due out soon and will set you back £12.99 on cassette and £17.99 for the 3" disk version.

Amazing pokes

Here's [redacted] few more pokes which won't give you infinite anything, courtesy of A.E. Garside.

POKE 23606,8
Makes lines un-readable
POKE 23617,236
Changes cursor to ?
POKE 23736,181:SAVE "program name"
Allows multiple saves to tape
POKE 23415,n
Renumber start line (n=line no.)
POKE 23415,n
Renumber Increments (n=line no.)

Three cheers and a hearty slap on the back for Mr Garside. Hope you're enjoying the freebie!

Whoops...

[redacted] seems a tiny inaccuracy occurred a few columns back. Stuart Moore from Cheshire has kindly (ahem) written to put things right. He says that "while the Carrier Command tips in Express 41 were pretty useful, the one about finding the enemy Carrier around Outcrop at the beginning of the game is wrong at least some of the time.

"Why so?, we cry "this [redacted] because the Carrier can actually start [redacted] any one of four islands. Here follows the position of the enemy carrier (in brackets) for each start position. Vattland (Thermopylone), Outcrop (Fulcrum), Taksaven (Outcrop), Fulcrum (Vattland)."

Thanks Stuart, I'm afraid you're not going to get a freebie because I don't like being proved wrong.

Robin Alway

CPC centre

End of the line for Dixons

So Dixons [redacted] [redacted] stop selling the CPC (see news story p 3). Once its current end of line sale has cleared the remainder of its stocks the high street chain will not be reordering. The news is as we feared (see last week's column), but it gives me absolutely no satisfaction to [redacted] proved right.

It appears the reasoning behind the decision [redacted] not so much that the CPC is not selling, but that it's taking up valuable shelf space that could more profitably be used to sell more up-market machines – PCs and the like. A CPC costing under £400 takes up approximately the same room in a store as a PC costing two, three or more times that, and Dixons appear to have calculated they can't afford to continue stocking it.

It's easy to over estimate the importance of this news. Fans of the Amstrad would, naturally prefer [redacted] see it on sale in as many stores [redacted] possible. On the other hand, there's little doubt that small, independent dealers offer customers a better service, since in the main they know much more about the machines they stock than the large chainstores with their densely packed shelves and ludicrously wide ranges. The spotty erberts behind the counters in high street stores often don't know what the hell they're talking about and have little interest [redacted] helping the customer find what suits his or her needs best.

Independent dealers, however, in my experience, tend to be enthusiasts rather than money grabbers, and are genuinely concerned [redacted] help the customer decide what [redacted] buy and get it up and running.

In any case, more than 2,000,000 CPCs have been sold in the past five years, and that kind of user base doesn't simply evaporate because one chain stops selling it.

How to beat *Star Wars*

Andy Harris of Coventry wonders if I can supply a [illegible] for the tape version of Domark's [illegible] Wars. [illegible] get yourself infinite [illegible].

You need to skip [illegible] block of the game: rewind the tape to the [illegible] type in the listing, type CAT and press Enter. Start the [illegible] by [illegible] Play and then any key. Soon you'll see the message: "Found Block [illegible] the tape, press Escape, type RUN [illegible]. Now press Play on [illegible] and any key on the [illegible] to start the [illegible] and away [illegible]

[illegible]

● [illegible] your infinite furry dice poke for [illegible] Cars [illegible] Steve Carey's CPC [illegible] NCE, 4 Queen St, Bath BA1 1EJ.

The voice of reason

Oh goodie, [redacted] scrap of controversy to liven things up a bit. A couple of weeks ago in this column a John Fairlie argued that Amstrad has no obligation either moral or legal to continue to support the CPC. Now Bill Gordon of Glasgow hits back.

WHACK! "I think the guy's got an attitude problem!"

WHAM! "Amstrad would be stupid to kill the CPC, because it's the best machine on the market."

SOCK! "Unlike other machines you get a complete system – there's no need [redacted] buy a separate monitor or settle for a crummy resolution TV modulator."

POW! "Amstrad has a duty to support the CPC – after all, if you buy life assurance you expect something [redacted] return for your outlay although you are not there to benefit." (Not quite with you on that one, Bill, but it's a point of view, I suppose.)

THWOK! "The crap in Mr Fairlie's letter saying you have no rights is nonsense, since Amstrad wouldn't dare to say 'We guarantee once you buy a computer from us we won't want [redacted] know you' - how many computers or [redacted] f/s would it sell if the public thought that was the case?"

KERPOW! "And you can run CPM too, so come on Sugar forget dodos like the PC-what's-its-number? you're currently trying to repaint and flog; concentrate on winners like the CPC, because with Christmas coming you could increase your ailing company's profits at a stroke. You'd outsell all the others by the length of Sauchiehall Street!"

People wonder why this country [redacted] going to the dogs, Bill Gordon claims (I [redacted] you not), and wonders whatever happened to the saying, "the customer is always right"?

If you know what happened to the saying, "the customer is always right," let the rest of [redacted] know by writing to, *Steve Carey's CPC Centre, NCE,* 4 Queen St, Bath BA1 1EJ.

Pass, stranger!

One of the many things that annoys me (apart from Dixons) [redacted] being unable to see all a game can offer because I can't get through the levels. So it gives me great pleasure to be able to furnish you with passwords for two excellent games. First off let's whip through Virgin's *Gemini Wing*:

Level 2: THESTART; Level 3: EYEPLANT; Level 4: WHATWALL; Level 5: GOODNITE; Level 6: SKULLDUG; Level 7: BIGMOUTH; Level 8: CREEPISH

And now let's get you into the different missions in Grandslam's rather tremendous *Thunderbirds*:

Level 2: RECOVERY Level 3: ALOYSIUS Level 4: ANDERSON

If you've any passwords you'd like [redacted] share, write to *Steve Carey's CPC Centre, NCE,* 4 Queen St, Bath BA1 1EJ.

Steve Carey

Now *Thunderbirds* really are go!

520ST-FM SUPER PACK

The Atari Super Pack is ideal for you if you want to get off to a flying start with the best in entertainment software. The Pack includes a 520ST-FM with ½Mb RAM, a built-in 1Mb disk drive, over £450 of top games and a joystick. If you buy the Super Pack at Silica Shop, we will add our own ST Starter Kit (worth over £200). Free Of Charge. Return the coupon for details.

£399

1Mb DISK DRIVE
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Atari CX40 Joystick	Atari Corp	£4.99

FREE ATARI BUNDLE VALUE: £458.97

With SM124 mono monitor: £498 INC VAT With SC1224 colour monitor: £698 INC VAT

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NOW WITH TV MODULATOR

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£499
INCLUDING VAT

ATARI 1040ST-FM	(Computer)	£499.99
VIP PROFESSIONAL	(Spreadsheet)	£149.95
MICROSOFT WRITE	(Word Processor)	£149.95
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	NORMAL RRP:	£884.82
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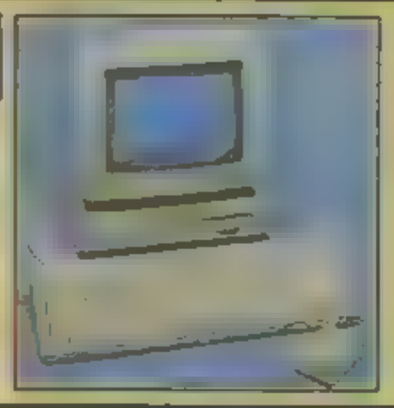
	PROFESSIONAL PACK PRICE:	£499.00

With SM124 mono monitor: £598 INC VAT
With SC1224 colour monitor: £798 INC VAT

2Mb & 4Mb MEGA ST

The MEGA ST computers are styled as as lightweight keyboard with a separate CPU, connected by a coiled telephone style cable. There are two versions of the MEGA ST, one with 2Mbytes of RAM and the other with 4Mbytes. Each version has a 1Mbyte double sided disk drive built-in to the CPU unit. The MEGA ST's do not come with modulator built-in and must therefore be used with a monitor. With every MEGA ST purchased, we will add the 'Professional Pack' software (worth £384.83) detailed above, plus the Silica ST Starter Kit (worth over £200) both Free Of Charge. Return the coupon for further details.



2Mb MEGA ST	4Mb MEGA ST
£[illegible]	£1199
+ mono monitor = £998	+ mono monitor = £1298
+ colour monitor = £1198	+ colour monitor = £1498

DTP PageStream £149 +VAT =£171.35

Desktop Publishing (DTP) is one of the fastest growing applications for personal computers. We are pleased to announce a powerful low cost package for the Atari ST called PageStream. PageStream costs only £149 (+VAT=£171.35) and, because it works with an Atari 1040ST and a Seikosha SP-180AI printer, you can be up and running with a complete system for less than £1000. Some of the features of PageStream are listed to the right. If you would like further information on this program, complete and return the coupon below ticking the 'DTP' box in the corner.

- TEXT-FLOW AROUND GRAPHICS
- ROTATION OF TEXT & GRAPHICS
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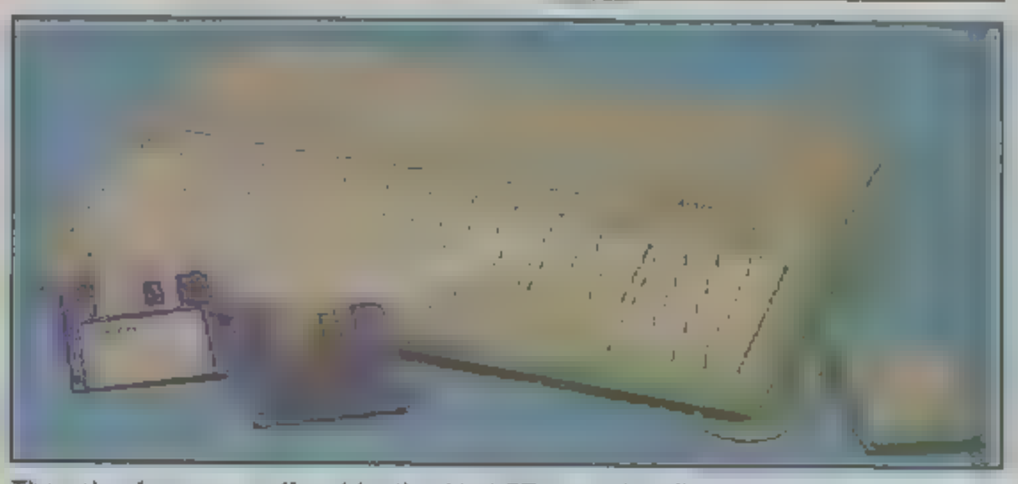

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Do you already own a computer
If so, which one do you own?

DTP ☐

STREET TALK

BY MIKE DUNN

WELL, hasn't it been a week of activity? No, not really. The really big news this week is the changearound at Epyx. It looks like we won't be seeing any more of the Games series, at least not on home micros, which is a great pity. The series, which included *Summer Games, The Games: Summer Edition, Winter Games* and *Summer Games II* were some of the best, most enjoyable sports simulations written for the computer. Still, they're apparently going to carry on writing for the Atari hand-held, so buy one of those! Nintendo are really making waves in the industry, especially in America with their threat to monopolise the coin-op conversions by getting the sole rights for the Nintendo console. Epyx might not be the only people to suffer as a result...

BATMAN is here at last, and thankfully, it's quite good, but isn't it funny how even dodgy games can make it to the top of the charts with a popular licence. Surely it's a more sensible idea, having spent a lot of money on a licence, to make sure that the programming is sound, and thereby sell even more copies on the strength of the game and the licence instead of just relying on the latter.

Well done Ocean, for Batman and previously Domark for Licence to Kill; as for the others (naming no names, but you know as well as I do who's responsible!) isn't it a good idea?

Right, that's my brief Gameplay over with. Thank you, you've been a wonderful audience. Tune in next week, same time, same channel, for Maff Evans.

TAME EXPRESS GAMES

Another bumper selection of **SPECTRUM** pokes

● ***XYBOTS***
POKE 27333,0 for infinite lives.
POKE 59283,0 to stop robot fire.

● ***VIGILANTE*** POKE 48735,0 for infinite lives (on the 48K version, you need to re-poke it on every level)

● ***GEMINI WING***
POKE 34370,0 for infinite lives
The access codes are:
level 1, THESTART
level 2, EYEPLANT
level 3, WHATWALL
level 4, GOODNITE
level 5, SKULLDUG
level 6, BIGMOUTH
level 7, CREEPISH
level 8, FINALFXS (and, as usual, no spaces between the words).

● ***MR HELI***
POKE 56128,0 for infinite lives, level 1.
POKE 52234,0 for infinite energy, level 1.
POKE 57219,0 for infinite lives, level 2.
POKE 53471,0 for infinite energy, level 2.
POKE 56448,0 for infinite lives, level 3.
POKE 52720,0 for infinite energy, level 3.
Arty Artingstall, Grimsby, S. Humberside

● ***GILBERT***
(48K SPECTRUM VERSION)
POKE 30372,0
POKE 28532,0
POKE 28533,0
POKE 28534,0
POKE 28535,201 for infinite snot and on the **128K SPECTRUM** version
POKE 30528,0
POKE 28672,0
POKE 28671,0
POKE 28682,0
POKE 28683,0
POKE 28684,201 for infinite snot.

● ***RAMBO III***
(48K SPECTRUM)
POKE 57830,0
POKE 57831,0
POKE 57832,0 for infinite lives.

● ***APB*** POKE 29311,175 enables you to complete each level.
The Rowenta Men, Grimbsy, S. Humberside

(No relation to the Tefal Men who poke for a certain Spectrum mag, I hope.)

● ***DUNGEON MASTER***
1. When choosing characters from the hall of fame, be sure to choose a good wizard, like Gothmog, as I have found that the wizard's powers are more useful on later levels.
2. When confronting enemy beasts, like mummy's screamers, rock creatures, etc, the wizard's powers come in very handy. If he casts a fireball at them they usually die, though obviously the further you get into the dungeons, the more powerful the beasts become. With practice, though, your wizardly powers should enable you to casta stronger fireball.
3. Avoid carrying too much equipment. Resist the temptation to collect all artifacts-Falchion swords, for example, are useless and heavy; it's better ■ discard them by throwing them up ahead, unless of course you meet an enemy, in which case it's much better to throw the thing at him! On the other hand, collect ■ the food you can carry; after level 4, it becomes scarce for quite a while. Drink ■ every opportunity; it doesn't add weight, but it's vital later on.
4. Keep lightweight items, such as burnt-out torches, rocks, scrolls etc., to use on floor triggers. It's much better to go prepared than getting to a trigger and finding that you have to leave behind an important helmet or sword simply because you're carrying nothing else to use!

Anyone got any help for getting past level 7 where I've been stuck for a month?
Mr. V. R. Marsden, Sheffield, S. Yorks.

● ***XYBOTS*** On level one, take the door (it's hidden) next to the exit; it's on the left, and you'll need the key. Kill the monster and go through the new exit you've found. This gives you loads of points and keys, full energy, and gets you transported to level 7.

When playing alone, if you're nearly dead, press fire on the other joystick, letting you carry on on that level without having to start the level again from scratch.

Also, on the arcade version, I once put my money in and was presented with an options screen allowing me to view ■ the levels, change the game price and the sound and all sorts of other goodies. Anyone else seen this?
Darryl Hulme, Barnsley, S.Yorks

● ***CHARIOTS OF WRATH*** **(ST)**
To activate the cheat mode, press "." (the decimal point) on the keyboard at any time during the game. This gives you infinite lives.

On the shoot-'em-up stages of the game you have all the following weaponry at your fingertips...
Keypad:
(- Single Small Bullets
) - Double Small Bullets
/ - Triple Small Bullets
* - Medium Fat Bullets
7 - Large Fat Bullets
■ - Small Flame Thrower

Special weapons
CURSOR UP = Very large single fireballs
LEFT CURSOR = Twin cannons
RIGHT CURSOR = Triple cannons
CURSOR DOWN = Very large twin cannons

HIT LIST
TOP 5 GAMES

Express's recommended games

1 GUNHED
Hudson Soft • PC Engine
Blasting good fun for the Engine. Trouble is, hardly anyone's got one!

2 BLOOD MONEY
Psygnosis • ST, Amiga, C64 and PC
A terrific shoot-'em-up on the Amiga, now on the ST, and every byte as good!

3 BATMAN
Ocean • Spectrum, C64. Almost on Amstrad, ST and Amiga
OK, I'm following the trend, but what the hell? It's a dead good game!

4 NEW ZEALAND STORY
Ocean • Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, ST, Amiga
Now available on the CPC aswell as everything else, this is one of the best arcade licences for ages. Kiwi flavoured and delicious!

5 APB
Domark • Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, ST, Amiga
Arrest the criminals as the over-worked Officer Bob. As the Interceptor might say, I like it!

DO YOU OWN THESE GAMES?

- **BATMAN**
- **INDIANA JONES THE GRAPHIC ADVENTURE**
- **LANCASTER**
- **XENON II**
- **SHADOW OF THE BEAST**

We've taken five of the best recent releases and declared war on them! Express needs you to help tame them; have you discovered a hidden cheat mode, a poke, or a bug that makes the game easier? Or do you have some tips to share with everyone else?
If you've got the info, send it to;

Tame The Game
4 Queen Street
Bath
BA1 1EJ.

The best game tamers from each issue win a prize; don't forget to tell us which computer you own!
We're also going to start a high score section to give you something to aim for, but we need some good scores from you- send us three tips on how you managed your score, and then achieve fame and er, more fame in the Gameplay pages...

GAME

HASH = Very large triple cannons
INSERT = Twin missles
CLR HOME = Flame thrower
When you've got a special weapon active, choose a standard weapon as well, from the keypad, for total destructive power!

Special features
B = Extra fuel
D = Extra energy
F = Top up special weapons (when selected)
Keep key held down to top up weapon completely.
F1 Takes you to the end of level guardian
F2 – F10 Select the multiple droids which surround your ship.
A.C. Duck, Fullwood, Preston

● ***ARCHIPELAGOS*** Always find out which way is north by turning round until you see the red planet in the sky. That is always north. Then look at the map. Navigation will be much easier.
Don't link up islands with "eggs of blood" on them, unless absolutely necessary, as they will gradually infect all linked pieces of land.

Avoid travelling through infected land - if you stop you could be killed. Instead, create islands in the sea and travel along those. Always make them as far apart as possible. If you travel back that route you shouldn't have to adjust the position of the cursor, just jump from island to island.

If you find a stone and it won't absorb, press F2 and check on the map. The enlarged section should show you where you need to make a connection. Remember brown land has to be sterilised and recreated before it will connect.
Gilli Marsh

● ***ELITE*** **(AMIGA)**
Leave the space station, and with the station directly behind you, fire your retro rockets and you will go straight through the station without incurring any damage, so if you find this in the least bit useful, try it!
C. Stevenson, Heathfield, E. Sussex

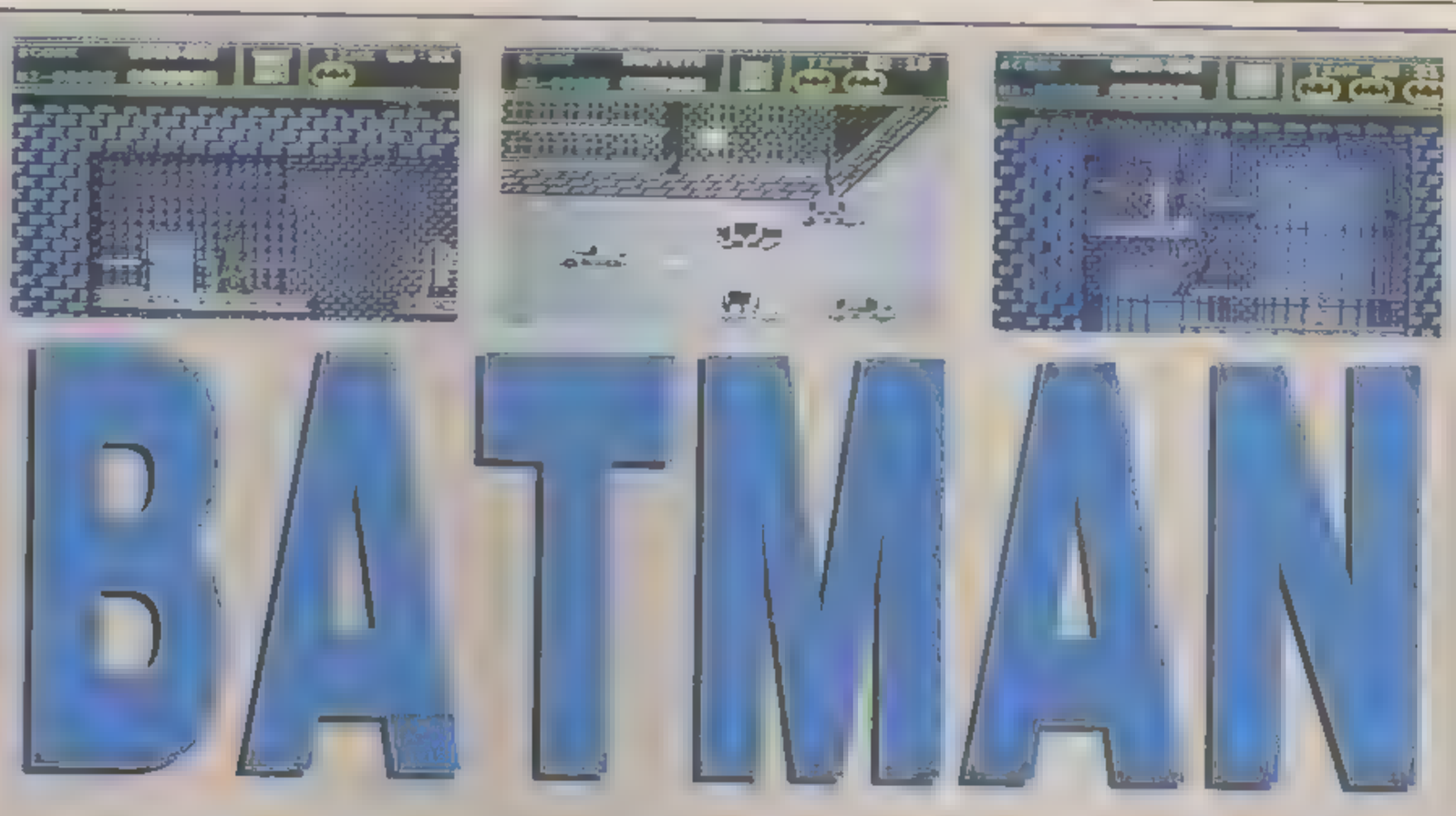
● ***ARKANOID II*** **(AMIGA)**
Type "Robocoppeter" on the title screen to enable the continue mode.

● ***BARBARIAN 2*** **(SPECTRUM WITH MULTIFACE)**
POKE 40159,0 = infinite energy.

● ***DRAGON NINJA*** **(SPECTRUM WITH MULTIFACE)**
POKE 38918,0 = infinite lives.
POKE 38684,1 = infinite time.

● ***SHANGHAI WARRIORS***
Enter your name as "outland" on the high score table. Start the game, press the delete key and all the punks die.

● ***STORMLORD*** **(SPECTRUM)**
Type "bringonthegirls", no spaces, and then press 1-4 to access that level.



BATMAN

At last the game of the film has arrived on the eight-bits, and it's been worth the wait. Oh, and just assume the ™ inserted after every word connected with the film.

GAMEPLAY • Seen the film? Well you'll know what the gameplay involves then! The game is divided into five parts based on the film. In the first level, you have to fight your way around a huge maze of platforms and corridors using your Batarang to blast everyone. At the end of the level you confront Jack Napier. When you shoot him, he falls into a vat of toxic waste, turning him into the Joker.

In the second level, you have to bomb through the town in your Batmobile, turning corners by swinging around lamp-posts with the Batrope. Avoid the Joker and all the other cars.
The third level is the chemical analysis in the Batcave. The Joker has poisoned several "consumables" and you have to work out which using the Batcave's computer; you've only got a minute to do it.

In the fourth stage you're back through the streets of Gotham City. Flying the Batwing, you have to cut through the ropes which hold down the balloons filled with poison gas. You must avoid the Joker's helicopters sent out to stop you.

In the last stage, you must make your way through the cathedral to the roof for the final confrontation with the Joker. Here, as in level one, you must use the Batrope and the Batarang to achieve your aim. If you fail in this last stage, the Joker takes off in his helicopter to wipe up the rest of Gotham City.

OK, it doesn't sound like anything special, but *Batman* has obviously been carefully worked to squeeze the last bit of playability out of the theme. The first level is a bit tough until you work out a route, but it's great fun sorting the route out! The second level doesn't look quite so smooth but nonetheless, the gameplay element is still strong. Good fun.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND • The Batgraphics are quite good on the first level; though the characters don't look so good in a still photo, they're well animated and the colour is effective. I was very disappointed with the 2D street sequence though; if you examine the shots on the back of the package, the shot of level 2 looks rather different, more like a 3D racing game; maybe the Amiga version will deliver this. Still, the sound is terrific, with two brilliant tunes, one on the title screen and the other during the game.

OTHER VERSIONS • The Spectrum is the only other one I've seen so far, and it's quite different to the C64. The graphics are much larger, and that alters the feel of the game quite considerably; the first level of the 64 version feels more "spacious" whereas the Spectrum version feels more cramped. Still, the scrolling is good, and the sound is pretty decent for a Spectrum aswell. An equally worthwhile purchase for Speccy owners.

VERDICT
This is probably going to be number one for the next 20 years; it's got to be the best licence that's been available for absolutely ages, and, just for a change, the game is brilliant as well. Good presentation, good game, very well hyped, so it should be a major success. Buy it, if you've even got the vaguest affinity for the film of Batman; as far as Batstuff goes, this knocks T-shirts and badges into a cocked hat (there's a sticker in the package as well!).

OTHER VERSIONS

Spectrum	**Sept 17th**	**£9.99 (c)**
		£14.99(d)
C64	**Sept 17th**	**£9.99 (c)**
		£14.99(d)
Amstrad	**Oct 2nd**	**£9.99 (c)**
		£14.99(d)
Amiga	**Oct 2nd**	**£24.99**
ST	**Oct 2nd**	**£24.99**
PC	**No version planned**	

FIRST PEEK

EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE

You might think from the title that this was a pointless attempt to rival Anco's Kick Off but it isn't. *European Superleague* is a management game for a player's game. Previous attempts at this have been associated with appauling graphics and screenfuls of text and tables; it looks very much as if CDS are departing from this image. Naturally you have all the features to contend with, like the training schedules, tactical planning, squad morale level, boardroom politics and press coverage (and the away teams!). CDS are currently looking at a November release for Spectrum, C64, Amstrad (£9.99 cass £14.99 disk) and ST and Amiga (£19.99). These shots look good - wait for the full review.

MINI REVIEWS... MINI REVIEWS...

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE

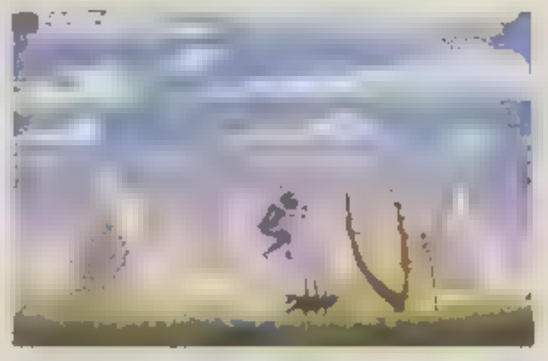
LUCASFILM GAMES • £29.99 • PC version reviewed • Also on Amiga and ■

Well, we waited for it! Indy "the action game" seemed ■ be timed just right, hitting the market as the film reached the peak of its popularity (as shown by its number one position in the charts) but Lucasfilm are considerably later with this one. Still, they'll probably pull it off; this Indy is much better looking than its predecessor, although there are a number of bad points. The cursor control is slow, and that makes the game slightly frustrating, especially when exciting things start happening! The little "movie" sequences are excellent; brilliant animation, with great use of colour, although they're not as appealing the 20th time round! Very good ■ look at, and much more entertaining than your average "watch the text scroll past" type of adventure. Even the copy protection is cleverly worked into the game; play it and see! Worth looking at, but changing around the six (yes, six) game disks becomes a bit ■ a chore after a while, and the PC version's attempt to play Indy's theme tune is outrageous.

It's a worthy sucesssor to the film despite its drawbacks. Still, whatever I say, it'll end up number one in the charts, so buy it anyway!

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

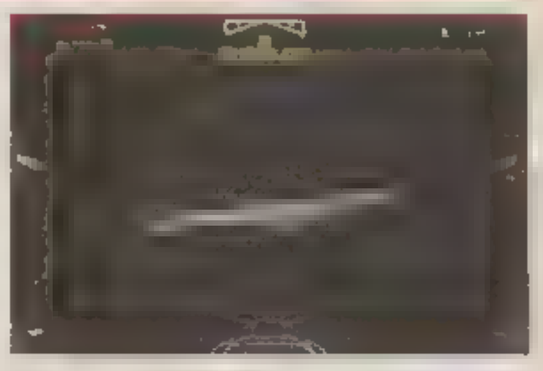
PSYGNOSIS • £34.95 (T-shirt included) • Amiga version reviewed • ST version under development



One dark night, a kidnapped baby was delivered ■ the priests of the temple of Necropolis. There, under a heavy guard ■ magical creatures, the baby was mutated by potions fed to it by the priests, until he became a terrifically powerful and fast (and a bit ugly) creature. He reached maturity, and came across the secret of his past, and he didn't like it much. Time to go and wield some bloody revenge against those priesty blokes! You can see something of the graphics in the screen shots, but believe me, they don't do it justice. I've never seen (in all my born days!) parallax scrolling to compare with this; apparently there are 13 levels! It really does look as if the Amiga's graphics have been pushed to the limits with this but, the gameplay is lacking; it has been said a million times before, and it'll probably be said a million times after, but great graphics don't make a naff game wonderful. *Beast* isn't quite what I would call naff, but it's not the best. That said, it's visually amazing, and the playability does increase as you get into it more, but still I feel the gameplay content falls well short. Definitely worth a look; terrific presentation, with a whopping great box and freebie T-shirt, but worth a purchase? Not so sure.

THE STAR WARS TRILOGY

DOMARK • £24.99 • Amiga version reviewed • Also on ST, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad and BBC



This isn't so much a mini-review as a triple mini-re-review! Domark have repackaged the three games based around the Star Wars films and released them together for the altogether reasonable price of £24.99. Everyone knows the storyline; if you don't, you don't really need to; just shoot everything! The first two (that's *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*) are very similar; both use the same wire-frame vector graphics, which move smoothly and quickly. *Return of the Jedi* is different in that respect, as it uses a scrolling fully coloured landscape. In the first game, you have to blow up the Death Star, by first fighting it out in space and then in the famous trench sequence. The second game in the series lets you blast the walkers and dodge the asteroids, and in the third you fly along in your speedbike to the Ewok village, and from there to the Death Star to blow up the central reactor. They're all old games, I know, but three games for the price of one is jolly good, as they're all of a high standard, and if you like one of these, you'll probably like the rest.

ONE-LINERS • ONE-LINERS

Play back

Your views on the latest software – call 0225 444439

"My favorite games of the moment are *Kick Off* and *Carrier Command*. I bought them after reading the reviews and I've not been disappointed; I've got an Amiga. I've been reading Future publications way back since *Amstrad Action*'s first issue, and I think they're very good, with ■ really high standard of journalism."
Yes. So do we.

"Why ■ there no Save Game on *Rocket Ranger*?"
Kevin Coll, Milton Keynes

"My prize for the most tedious game of 1989 is *Rocket Ranger* on the ST. I find it unbelieveable that the 95oK, spread over three disks could be used to create such an abysmal game."
Mike Hoskins, Winbourne, Dorset

" What's wrong with cracking anyway? Just because you can't!"
Stiff Cliff, Freestyle UK

"Hi."

"*Xenon II* came out before schedule on the Amiga, but I've heard that about 80% of them had to go back because they didn't work. What a pity. I'd rather it had been late"
Rob Sutton

"Is *Kick Off* any good on the C64? Also Atari STs are not very good (ahem!) computers. C64s and Amigas are the best. An ST isn't worth as much as ■ Vic-20!"
Brian Donahue, Strevan

Well, any opinions? No, not on the ST, on C64* Kick Off- *I haven't seen it yet.

"A tip for people who've just bought *Xenon II*; when collecting all the money, the best way to do it is to shoot waves of aliens as opposed to just single ones because you only get the money for destroying the waves."
Darren Smith, Doncaster

MOVES ON THE MOVE

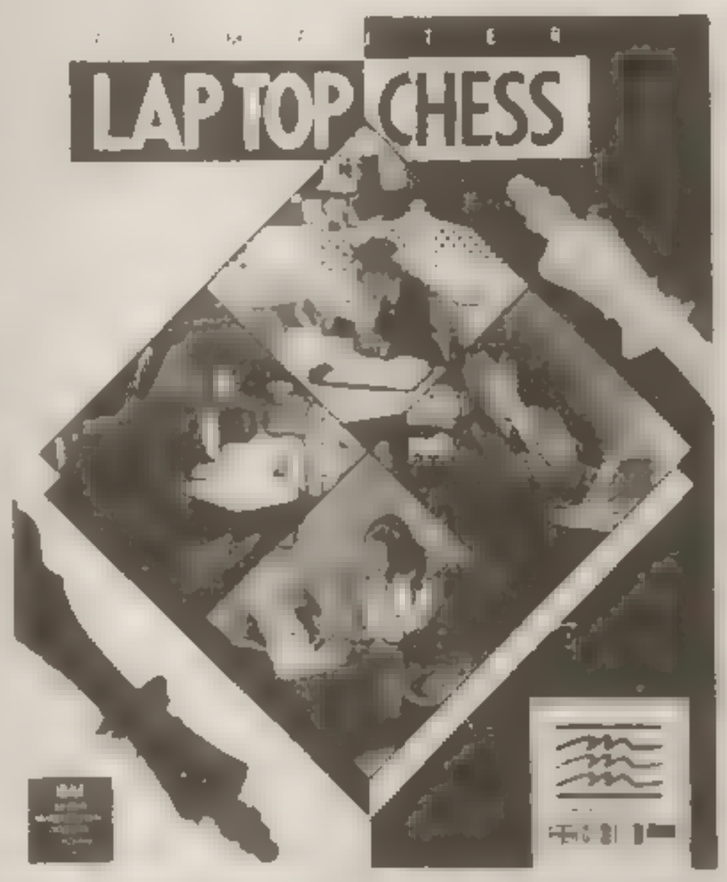
Andy Storer checks out a powerful chess program designed specifically for laptop PC-compatibles

LAPTOP CHESS
MINDSCAPE PC • £24.99

The algorithms behind *Laptop Chess* are good enough to have beaten the 1985 chess world champion. Co-programmed by David Levy, the international chess master, organiser of the recent Computer Olympiad and the man who claimed no computer would beat him in a decade 21 years ago, the program is based on the successful Cray Blitz.

But whereas the Blitz ran on a $10,000,000 mini-computer, *Laptop Chess* runs on any PC-compatible portable so it's something of an achievement for it to offer an opening library of 16,000 moves and 16 levels of play with both 2D and 3D displays. In addition there are features to set up problem positions, print out game moves, view analyses of positions and perhaps most important of all, take back and replay moves.

There's no denying *Laptop* plays a mean game - made all the more difficult, unfortunately, by rather unclear screen displays. While pieces are depicted adequately enough, locating your current cursor position is somewhat hit and miss - you have to resort to using the navigating arrow keys to move the cursor until it occupies an empty square before returning it to the piece you want to move because its highlighting isn't sufficient. Having hit Enter you move to the destination square and press Enter again - hey presto the piece moves.



This isn't the only disappointment in display even though the graphics are customised for LCD screens - the 3D option is curiously positioned as an off-centre view which manages to obscure some of the pieces and is therfore virtually unusable. The last thing you want to do when playing chess is to have to figure out which pieces are which. Planning moves ahead is much easier if you stick to the simple 2D display.

These two grumbles aside, *Laptop Chess* is remarkably fast - its response to the first half dozen opening moves is often instantaneous - this regardless of the playing strength. On-line help, the abiltiy to save games in progressand on-screen chess-clock all add to its positive features. Besides using the arrow keys to move a square cursor around the board to position pieces, you can also enter moves by typing in chess notation.

So, will it give you a good game? Since at level 5, a neat little Queen's Gambit resulted in a 45 move win for White, while the same tactics lost out convincingly to level 13, it would seem there's quite a hefty chunk of programming experience knocking around in here.

★★★★

HIGHLIGHTS
- All the features found on desktop programs
- Fast response and strong play
- Runs on mono or colour portable or desktop machines

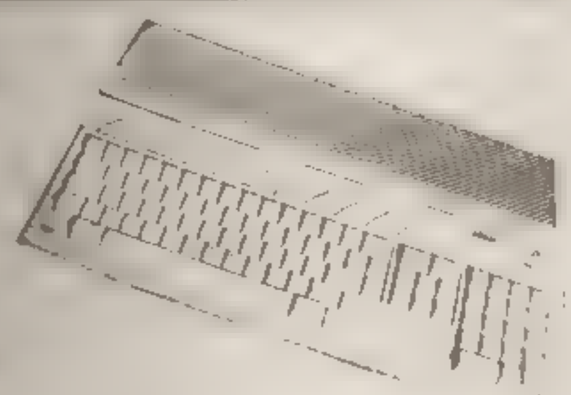
DRAWBACKS
- Confusing 3D display
- Difficulty in locating cursor position

WAREHOUSE CLEARANCE

JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS

ATARI 520 STFM

Never before at this incredible price. No so-called free-gifts, no worthless offers. Just great value for money. Package contains Atari 520 STFM, Operating Software, Manuals, Mouse etc, and all at the incredible low prices as below:-



520 STFM (1/2 Meg Drive) £175.00
520 STFM (1 Meg Drive) £240.00
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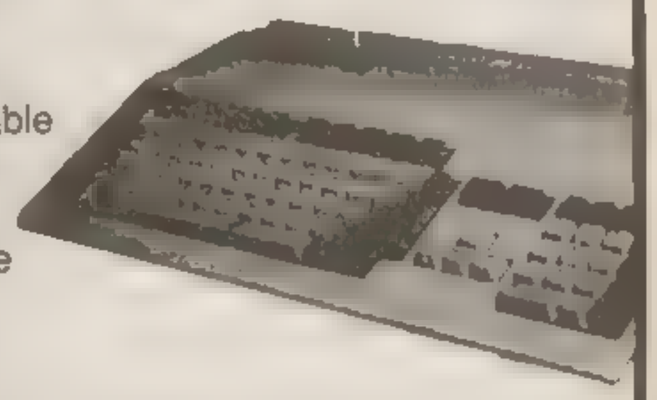

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BEEB BOX

Shrea and share alike

One consequence of the Beeb's waning attraction to commercial software has been that people trying to market new, or unusual software products have been having a hard time of it.

Shareware is one way of doing the marketing, as already noted in these pages. Now Ian Copestake Software have taken up the idea with the first major piece of BBC software to don the label 'Shareware'

Wordpower can lay claim to being the most powerful wordprocesser for the BBC range of computers. Fast, WYSIWYG and with exceptionally good printer support, it also has the delux price tag of £36.00. No longer however. A full working version of Wordpower can now be obtained for the princely sum of £5.00. If you find yourself using the package on a regular basis, honor should compel you to register and pay the full price.

Sharing ROM

My second shareware item this week concernes the ABS club's ROM BASIC compiler. This program compiles your BASIC programs into code you can call from Sideways RAM, or blow into an EPROM. Now none of these ideas are new, but I was pleasantly surprised by the mannor of execution. Expecting a spartan command line based approach, I was instead greeted by a friendly mode 4 screen complete with prompts. Compiling a ROM is simplicity itself, you just follow the prompts. I do have a couple of small beefs though, the program expects you to know the correct file name in advance, and bombs with an erroe message if you don't supply it. Second, the documentation supplied is just not good enough. Overall though, well worth using.

Pipedream

Pipedream 3, the RISCOS version ■ now out after a long period of gestation, but at least I am assured there are no dreadful bugs left in it. Earlier Pipedreams, such as on the PC or Z88 were worthy products, if a little staid. The new version promises to fill a massive hole in the Archimedes productivity software market.

Acorn have now formed an X-window group in Cambridge. And no it's not ■ forum for some deviant behaviour, but a serious attempt to promote the X-window (for Unix) standard. The group will be known as Control-X and if you didn't know it X Windows is a de-facto standard for controlling graphics and window software.

Minerva

Reader Terry Blunt has sent in a completely undocumented feature of BASIC concerning the ON statement. For example, the two lines below behave completely differently.

```
10 ON N% GOSUB 1000,2000,3000
10 ON N% GOSUB 1000,2000,3000 ELSE
```

See if you can work out the difference

Andrew Brown

SECTOR 64

Showtime

With the PC Show now on top of us, you should start to get a bit excited with never ending amounts of software and hardware to look at. Not to mention all the voices and faces of the computer industry people you can go and meet, whether games programmers, demos writers or even journalists.

I must admit Earls Court, being very big and all on one level, is very confusing to walk around. The reason for moving was because there werer so many people attending the Olympia show it was unsafe, as it wasn't allocated for that many people. But to be quite honest I thought Olympia was a lot better because it was easier to find your way around. I attended nearly all the days at Earls Court but I still couldn't find my way around the inner stalls - for most people all they paid for was a ticket to escape from the maze.

If you're going to spot all the famous faces that belong to all the names you've read about and seem everywhere then I'd try ■ bars around the walls ■ the show. That's where they usually hang round but not necessarily drinking alcohol (who mentioned that?). Actually amazingly enough a lot of people we spoke to said they weren't going to the show because it wasn't really for their machine, but let's be honest the PC Show seems to cover more about the 64 than the recent Commodore show. But it's not only that, the PC Show it a very big event and all the leading software companies turn up in full colour promotingtheir selections of goodies, with compititions, give away posters, gimick type things and lots more, even free have-a-go arcade machines.

Only on a Sunday

The best day for you to go is Sunday - no joke, the software companies throw their games at you. At the last PC Show just gone they threw most of their stock into the crowd including games, T-shirts (a bit dodgy catching the size), posters, hats, bits of the stand, well you've got the idea Anyway it's all top class and a very slick event, not to be missed but don't get lost.

Sonic mistake

Last week we talked about the new music house ■ appear on the map, and I made the awful mistake to miss out the founder of the group, George, who will be the man responsible for the group's success when they take off.

Ian and Mic

MSX TRA

Getting soft

• Anco is now once again producing MSX software. Their new addition to the range is *Rally Cross Challenge* due out sometime in October at the price of £9.95.

• Ocean also continues to convert its major titles to the MSX format, with *New Zealand Story* due out on the good old MSX any time now.

Now, *New Zealand Story* was given rave reviews when it was released on other formats (see issue 41 of *NCE*), so if Ocean manages to make even a half decent job of converting this game to the MSX, and manages to get it to run on all makes of MSX machines, then this game is a must for all game-player's collections. It looks promising anyway.

• News that will make all you MSX 1 owners wish you owned an MSX 2 computer. My latest list of Japanese imported games, courtesy of M.P.T. computers of London, includes titles such as *Xevious* by Namco, *Kontra* and *King Kong II* from Konami, *Tetris* by B.P.S, *Bubble Bobble* from Taito, *Arkanoid II* from Nideco, and *Zoids* from Toshiba.

Now all these titles are MSX 2 only, are all supplied on ROM cartridge, and are superior to any versions you may have seen in the UK.

Link up

MSX LINK are once again planning to hold an MSX show, and have already booked the venue, which this year is to be the South Holland Centre in Spalding, Lincs.

The date for the event ■ November the 26th, and for anyone interested in visiting the show or any trades people wish to have a stand allocated them, the person you need to contact ■ David Webb, 11 Ayscough Ave, Spalding, Lincs, or phone (0775) 711714 9am-5pm

Yours truly will once again be attending, making a nuisance of myself, and spilling beer over all the hardware. Just like last year, in fact.

Joy of sticks

Now that I have had I chance to give Quickshots new Wizmaster games controller (alright, joystick) a real work out on games, I thought I'd deliver my verdict - and I can tell you it is a pleasure to use.

The first thing that strikes you when you see the Wizmaster is the build quality, the construction is excelent with smooth moulded edges and positive fire buttons.

You also have a switch that allows you to set the joystick to the type of computer you own,and as there is an MSX option, this means that the side by side fire buttons can be set independently. This option is a must for all Japanese games that are now being imported like the arcade smash from Activision, *R-Type*.

Of course this feature on its own does not make a good joystick; but nevertheless, with the Wizmaster having the capability of being used either as a hand held device, or of stuck firmly to a flat surface, and with a choice of interchangeable hand grips or the thumb pad, it is sure to suit most games players.

The Wizmaster certainly looks worth more than its £11.95 asking price, and is heartily recommended.

Keith Neale

QL corner

QUANTA workshop

QUANTA, the QL users group, has organised a two day workshop for this weekend (Saturday 30 September and Sunday 1 October). The venue is the Kingsthorpe Community Centre, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, and the fun starts at about 10.00 each day.

The workshop will consist of the usual mix of talks and demos. Both of the QL hard disk systems will be on show, and copies of the reprinted Jan Jones SuperBASIC book will be available, as well as the new Minerva operating system.

Even if you don't belong to QUANTA, you'll be made very welcome. Further details from Phil Boreman on (0742) 49850, who can also provide information on hotels in the area, if you feel in need of a lengthy computing 'fix', in company with other addicts.

More bugs

With both JS and JM ROMS, using silly parameters can make INPUT and READ do funny things.

Each time you type RUN after a superBASIC error, or after pressing Control Shift to break out of a program, the system loses 16 bytes of memory. This is only recovered when you type NEW.

RESPR doesn't work while a task is running, and RESPR'd space can only be released by resetting the machine.

Minerva

I've just received the latest information on QView's *Minerva*, "an improved operating system", for the QL which I mentioned a few issues ago.

I don't know if all the bugs I've been mentioning have been fixed, but substantial speed increases are claimed, and many of the standard features considerably enhanced. For instance, SELECT ON now works with strings, and the second screen can now be accessed from SuperBASIC.

Minerva comes on a couple of EPROMs, and costs £30, unless you're a member of QUANTA or QL SUB, in which case you get it for £25. Contact QView on (0480) 412884 for more information if you want ■ give your QL a brain transplant!

PSST! Wanna cheap drive?

ECD Magnetics is selling brand new Panasonic JU364 3.5-inch disk drives for £35 each. You have to build a suitable power supply, and find a case to put them in, but this isn't too difficult if you are handy with a soldering iron, or you know a man who is. QUANTA member Terry Griffiths bought a pair and reports that they worked fine.

Terry also suggests saving money by using Telex rolls instead of fanfold paper for listings and fax rolls if you have a thermal printer.

ECD Magnetics is on (0342) 833150.

John Torofex

PC UPDATE

US PC Update

There are some interesting things going on in the States at the moment. Most of them will eventually get over to the UK, but you may like to take note of the following in advance of the pack.

Batch file fans will probably be frustrated with DOS's lack of simple functions to take user input and perform sections of code as sub-routines. There are always ways of using small PD routines to get round these limitations, but then you have to have a stack of little COM files on your disk to accompany each batch. Hyperkinetix Inc have a solution to this in the form or a batch file compiler called *The Builder*. This little goody takes any existing batch file and compiles it to a stand-alone .COM or .EXE file, which the company claims takes up very little extra room. The program also supports many extensions to MS-DOS batch files, including WHILE..WEND loops, CASE statements and sub-routines. It also contains the basics for constructing menus and selection screens and an on-line editor for putting the whole thing together. Ring Hyperkinetix on 010 714 668 9234 for more details of this $99 product.

Continuing the programming theme, how would you like a program which would trap errors in *logic* rather than those in syntax. *Logic Gem* from Sterling Castle claims to do just this, and with any source code - sounds pretty miraculous. As if this isn't enough, it also produces automatic documentation of the your program logic, so that when you come back to it some months later, you can work out what you meant. $99 for this one, too, from Sterling on 0101 800 722 7853 - that's an international freephone number.

On the hardware side, an 80287 chip is useful for a variety of DTP, CAD and spreadsheet applications on an AT-style PC. A typical increase in speed of 170%-200% on the Intel co-processor ■ nothing to be sniffed at, especially if the replacement chip costs about the same as the original. Add to that an extra set of registers which can be used for further speeding of code when programs are specially written for it and IIT could have a winner. The IIT-2C87 chip from Integrated Information Technology Inc (010 408 727 1885) is the silicon in question. No doubt this one, too, will find its way across the pond before too long.

'New' Amstrad PCs

The new Amstrad 1000 series looks at first sight to be a range of bargains. A base level VGA 386 machine for around £1250 is good value at today's prices. However, this machine, and any others similarly specified, are really unusable as they stand. A VGA 386 PC without a hard disk or monitor needs at least £600 spending on it (£450 for 40Mb hard disk and controller, £150 for mono VGA monitor) to be usable, and for many DOS 386 applications, let alone OS/2, 1 Mb will soon feel cramped.

This ■ not to knock Amstrad, though. The cutting out of the most maligned component of the 2000 series, their slow hard drives, seems eminently sensible. Dealers and third parties can now start ■ supply their own kit to better the existing Amstrad performance. The fact that they can also make a bit more profit by adding their own hard drives and monitors may well make them more interested in handling Amstrads, too.

There's one aesthetic problem surrounding the 1000 series, of course. If you fit an alternative VGA monitor to the Amstrad system unit, how's it going to fit in the well on the system unit case? At best, you're going to have a gap around the plinth of the monitor, at worst an unstable monitor sitting over the well. Perhaps its still best to stick to Amstrad monitors, which ■ no doubt what AMS is hoping.

Cornish farings

Squeezing between the last two PC Updates I've had a week's holiday (what happens if I want a fortnight, Mr Ainsley?). I went ■ the tip of Cornwall and spent some while tripping round the sights of the area in the rain. One of these is a fish and chip shop in ■ Just. There I was, chomping my way through best Newlyn cod, when my ears tuned into some interesting phrases from the next table. Phrases like 'Winchester controller' and 'Prototyping ■ Taiwan' and 'Speed index'. In true newshound fashion I watched the two ■ them leave the café, pick up a PC from the back of a Mercedes estate and disappear into a large house on the other side of the square. Is this or ■ this not the best thing you've read since Raymond Chandler?

Business card in hand I followed, entered the house and collared one of the guys from the chip shop in a room full of large motherboards and busy people soldering. It turned out to be the main office of Microversal, a PC design and OEM assembly company which among other things builds most of Future Computer's PCs (no relation to Future Pubs, by the way). The company also designs and makes all kinds of graphics cards, again for other companies to market. These range from VGA cards to ultra-high resolution DTP and CAD graphics. They have their own CAD system for printed circuit board design and a turnover of over a quarter of a million pounds. Not bad for an outfit based on England's toe with a staff of under two dozen!

A programmer's tip

If you have trouble opening the screw top of a plastic beer bottle, try a pair of traditional nut crackers. You can then apply a lot more torque to the cap than with your bare hand.

Simon Williams

• This is the basis for the new 1000 series, but with half the hardware missing.

PCW PATCH

Poor show?

As you wander round the PC Show this weekend, how much stuff for your PCW will you see? Very little, I bet. The software and hardware market for the PCW has all but dried up. But, for those of you looking for a bit of inspiration, here are five ideas to jazz up your PCW. Check the mail order ads of *Express* or *8000 Plus*, which have all these featured.

• **Coloured ribbons** You can buy a variety of hues ■ brighten up your correspondence and newsletters: pink, brown, blue, orange, green and red. With ingenuity you can make colour pictures with a DTP package.

• **Ribbon re-inkers** For £9 or so you buy ■ spray can (which suspiciously does not say it is CFC free) which re-inks your ribbons up to fifty times.

• **Different printer styles** *LocoFont* is an add-on package to *LocoScript* which gives you a dozen or so alternative printer styles – a nice change if you're sick of the standard style. Details 0306 740606. *SuperType* does a similar thing for *Protext*.

• **Games** There are far too many games to list here but you might try Scrabble, chess, backgammon, shoot-'em-ups, adventures, cricket, soccer, US football...

• **New printer** If you're fed up with your adequate, if a bit unstimulating, PCW printer, try a 24-pin model. NLQ in the time it takes your printer to do draft, and vastly improved quality thanks to those 24 pins. Try an NEC P2200 for around £300. These printers work fine with *LocoScript* producing all the characters (you need an extra disc for £25 or so – check for details on 0306 740606) and *Protext* (with no extra software needed). You also need an RS232 interface which will cost about £60.

Free sheet

From round about now until the end of January, Amstrad is selling the PCW 9512 with a free ASF 9512 sheet feeder (the thing that hooks onto the printer and inserts single A4 sheets one at a time automatically, enabling you to ■ for a walk while *LocoMail* churns out your mail shot). Price is still £499. The device works blissfully with *LocoScript* but we couldn't do a thing with *Protext*.

Backup device

A simple tip. Name your work disc with the date it was last backed up, using [f5] 'Rename' in *Loco 1*, or [f4] in *Loco 2*, from the disc manager. Use [SHIFT] hyphen to separate elements, i.e. name it SEP_27 or 27_09_89 or whatever.

In *Protext*, create an empty file called 27_09_89.GRP or similar, and the name will appear ■ the head of each directory listing.

Loco 2 vs. Protext

The word processor buyers' guide (*Express* 44) wisely avoided recommending either *Loco 2* or *Protext*. Though I use *Protext* a lot, especially for writing, I must admit to finding *LocoScript 2* – plus all the convenient add-ons like *LocoFile*, *LocoMail*, *LocoFont* and the printer disks – a lot better for letters, concert programmes and newsletters. As this is probably 90% of the use that the PCW is put to, I suppose I'm recommending *LocoScript*!

Basil Pigg

ARCHIMEDES LORE

Pulling the plug

Mr A.R. Patterson wrote to tell me of a problem he had when running *Droom* from Resource. He was getting a 'File SLOAD not found ■ line nn' error when trying to load the program. The good people at Resource tracked down the problem for him, which was actually nothing to do with *Droom* ■ ■. Some applications unplug particular modules normally found in the Archie, usually to make room for their own code. If the next application you run needs the non-existent module, it may issue this error.

The answer, according to Mr Patterson, is to Type *UNPLUG to read off the unplugged modules and then *RMReInit <module name> to plug in the module again. I had this very error when trying to run Minerva's *Orion* (still one of the best games on the Archie), so I thought I'd try it out. Try as I might to get it ■ fall over, *Orion* loaded perfectly. If and when the error does occur again, though, I'll be ready!

More for nowt

Those who have bought the Acorn PC Emulator will know that it only leaves about 450K free for PC applications on a 1 Mb machine. You can obtain a free upgrade, however, to a new version of the program which will give around 600K free, direct from Acorn Customer Support. Return your original emulator disk (not the MS-DOS one) ■ <ital>Acorn Customer Support, Acorn Computer, Pulbourn Road, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 4JN<rom>.

The revised software is also available on the the Acorn Support Information Database (SID), which is available via a gateway from Prestel.

Second impression

Current update on the <ital>Impression<rom> saga is that my beta test copy may ■ coming, as long as they haven't run out of dongles! The release version is still three to four weeks away. I'm sure it'll be worth seeing, though, I really am.

Clare's shorts

Coincidentally, Clares Micro Supplies are about three weeks away from the release of <ital>Artisan 2<rom>. This ■ the sequel to their best selling <ital>Artisan<rom> art package, which now boasts full perspective, a fully adjustable grid lock and graduated fills. MD, Dave Clare says that one of their main objectives with the new product is ■ maintain the same simplicity of user-interface. Their primary market is education, where ease-of-use is a major concern. The new product will also provide colour separations for both spot and process colour.

The other new product soon for release is <ital>Tempus<rom>. Yet another DTP package, but with a low price tag of ú129.95 and low memory usage of around 128K. This should make the program very usable on a 1 Mb machine. It looks like this Autumn could see the battle of the Archie DTPs.

Bertrum Carrot

EXPRESS LISTINGS

The listings page with a difference: they're worth reading

Ten early computers

10 Jacquard Loom
French loom of 1805 which produced patterns 'programmable' by punch cards
20 Difference Engine
Charles Babbage's 1823 punch-card programmable calculating machine could cope with polynomials and trig functions and had the first printer. It cost £1,500 and its programmer, Ada Lovelace, was always drunk, starting a trend in computing
30 Analytical Engine
The follow-up to the Difference Engine which cost a fortune (£20,000) and was never finished, thus starting another trend in computing
40 ASCC
Aitken's 1944 Automatic Sequence Controlled Calculator was an electric implementation of the Analytical Engine. It was eight feet by 50, took six seconds to add two numbers, and had 0.12K of memory
50 Colossus
Alan Turing's wartime machine could process 25,000 bytes per second and cracked the German Enigma codes, but details are still kept secret
60 ENIAC
An electronic version of ASCC, the 1946 university machine was ten feet by one hundred feet and took just 0.2 milliseconds to add two numbers – but only had a memory of 0.02K
70 Manchester Univ — Mark I
Generally thought of as the world's first true computer, it ran its first program on June 21st 1948, had a keyboard, a visual display and a 0.5K memory
80 LEO
'Lyons Electronic Office' – for Lyons, the tea company – not only was the first business computer in 1953, it also set yet another computing trend... in awful puns
90 IBM 360
The 1964 machine was the first popular business machine, named 360 because it was an all-round problem solver (hence 360 degrees) – an example of IBM's side splitting humour
100 MK14
Sir Clive Sinclair's first home computer of the 70s had a 16 key keyboard (entirely in hex) and 256K of RAM – and cost just £46.55 inc. 8% VAT

Ten more Shakespearian quotes about computing

10 The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers
(*Henry IV Part II* Act IV Scene ii line 86)
The only sensible solution to the Apple vs Microsoft/Hewlett Packard litigation
20 Remuneration! O! That's the Latin word for three farthings
(*Love's Labour's Lost* III i 143)
On the ads for jobs in computing magazines that offer 'excellent remuneration'
30 That glib and oily art, to speak and purpose not
(*King Lear* I i 227)
On the PR men who promise you that a new product is 'two weeks away, awaiting documentation'
40 A gentleman... that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month
(*Romeo and Juliet* II iv 156)
The sort of person who rings up magazines 'asking a quick technical question'
50 This music mads me; let it sound no more
(*Richard II* V v 61)
Games soundtracks played on the PC
60 Oftentimes excusing of a fault doth make the fault the worse by the excuse
(*King John* IV ii 30)
On Alan Sugar saying on how the Amstrad PC didn't need a cooling fan, but they put one on because that's what people wanted, and if they wanted tactical nuclear weapons, he'd bundle them in too
70 Flat burglary as ever was committed
(*Much Ado About Nothing* IV ii 54)
On people who advertise for 'contacts wanted' with the intention of swopping pirate software
80 I have neither words, nor wit, nor worth – I only speak right on
(*Julius Caesar* III ii 225)
Bow-tied columnists in monthly glossies
90 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
(*Hamlet* I ii 133)
On the PC200
100 I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people
(*Macbeth* I vii 32)
On the games houses who trade off free lunches for favourable reviews

Ten excuses software houses use at two week intervals explain why their product isn't here yet

10 It's two weeks away, awaiting documentation.
20 We're waiting for the manuals to be printed, which will take about two weeks.
30 The program is finished and will be with you in two weeks or so.
40 We're just doing the final bug-fixing. It'll be with you in a fortnight or so.
50 The disk is at the duplicators right now. It should be back in about fourteen days.
60 We're getting the packaging put together as I speak to you. It'll be ready well within the month.
70 It's all ready and we're about to start shipping out the first copies. Yours should arrive just after the weekend after next.
80 The packages are right in front of me now, but the girl who mails them out has just left on a two-week holiday. They'll be sent out as soon as she gets back.
90 All our review copies have been sent out. Let's see, it's the 7th now; we have one due back on the 21st that I can send you.
100 Well, due to some bugs in this version, we're upgrading it, so rather than send you this one, we'll send you version 2.0 which is almost finished, and is just two weeks away, awaiting documentation...

NEXT WEEK ■ NEXT WEEK ■ NEXT WEEK

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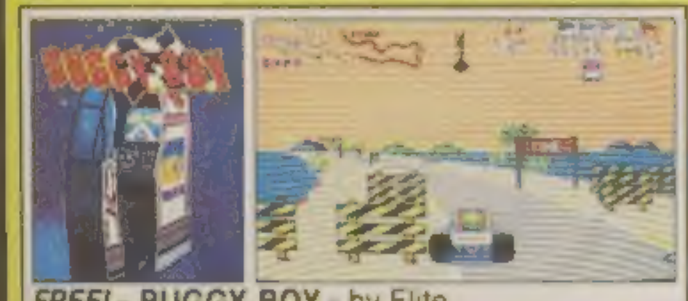

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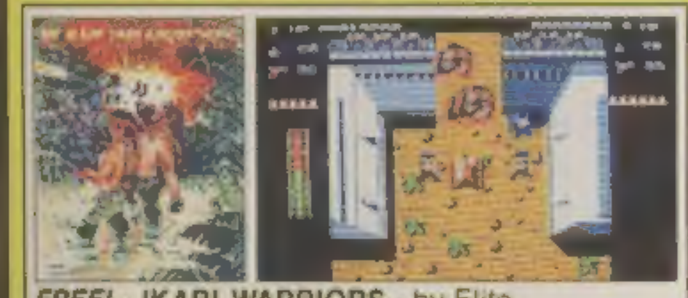

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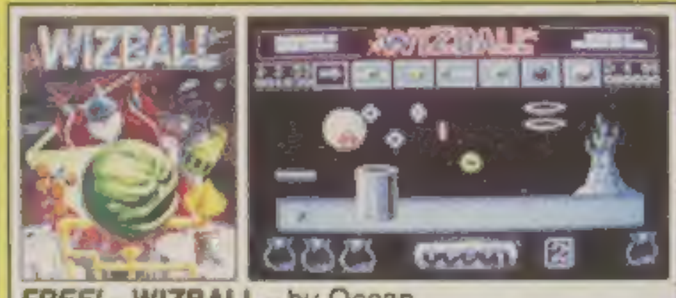

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The Amiga 500 is one of a new breed of technologically advanced computers, which are now emerging as the new standard for home computing, based around the new Motorola 68000 chip. The A500 has 512K RAM and ■ 1Mbyte double sided disk drive built-in. It can be connected directly to ■ wide range of monitors, or to a domestic TV set through a TV modulator. Designed with the user in mind, the A500 features ■ user friendly WIMP environment and comes supplied with a free mouse. And, when you buy your Amiga from Silica Shop, the UK's No1 Amiga specialists, you will experience an after sales service that ■ second to none, including a technical support helpline and free newsletters and price lists. Return the coupon below for our current information pack, which will give details of the Silica service and the very latest Silica Amiga offers. E&OE

WHY SILICA SHOP?

Before you decide when to buy your new Commodore Amiga computer, we suggest you consider very carefully WHERE you buy it. There are MANY companies who can offer you a computer, a few peripherals and the top ten selling titles. There are FEWER companies who can offer a wide range of products for your computer as well as expert advice and help when you need it. There is ONLY ONE company who can provide the largest range of Amiga related products in the UK, a full time Amiga specialist technical helpline and in-depth after sales support, including free newsletters and brochures delivered to your door for as long as you require after you purchase your computer. That one company is Silica Shop. We have been established in the home computer field for ten years and can now claim to meet our customers requirements with an accuracy and understanding which is second to none. Here are just some of the things we can offer you:

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